

# **Study on The Employment of Fine Art Traditions in Video Games**

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## Declaration

I, Yap Mei Ying, declare that this thesis entitled "Study on the Employment of Fine Art Traditions in Video Games" is entirely original with the exception of quotes and summaries from published or unpublished sources that are properly cited throughout. This report has not been submitted, in whole or in part, to this university or any other institution for any other degree or certification. Team Spaghetti Code worked together to build the game project Hullbound; this thesis just details my personal contribution as a 2D artist.

Signature: 

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Date: 22 May 2026



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## Abstract

The purposeful use of fine art traditions, particularly found-footage horror and halftone printmaking, in the 2D visual identity of the Cold War psychological horror tank game *Hullbound* is examined in this thesis. The study uses a practice-as-research approach, where the main technique of inquiry is the production of the game's 2D components.

In order to synthesize the material aesthetics of degraded film, glitch video art, and mechanical print reproduction, a unified five-stage processing pipeline was created: greyscale painting, posterization, noise and halftone overlays, gradient map with a limited lospec color palette, and per-asset color tint. To guarantee chromatic and textural coherence, this pipeline was used in the main menu, promotional poster, and tank interior shots.

Critical self-reflection and comparison analysis against the theoretical and practical precedents set in the literature review—such as the games *No I'm Not A Human*, *Disco Elysium*, and *Transistor*—were used to assess the results. The results show that a methodical, art-history-driven processing pipeline can create a visually cohesive and thematically relevant game identity, and that the approach is transferable to other projects and art movements.

In addition to providing a reproducible paradigm for small development teams looking to base their visual direction on fine art traditions, the thesis adds a recorded case study to the field of game art research.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Overview: Hullbound

#### 1.1.1 Game Introduction

Hullbound is a story-driven tank simulation game with psychological horror, developed for PC by team Spaghetti Code. The game is set in an alternate Cold War timeline in which the 1961 Berlin Wall crisis cascades into a full-scale nuclear war.

The player controls a Soviet tank gunner assigned to the T-279, a prototype heavy tank said to be able to withstand even a nuclear detonation. Trapped in the tank with a fanatical tank commander and a mentally deteriorating driver, the player must juggle between shooting enemies and making the right choices in an unforgiving war.

The game has two gameplay sections. First of which is a 2D interior of the tank where the player, as the gunner, communicates with the tank crew members, navigates the interior via point-and-click, and is confronted with choices that change how the story ends. The second section is a 3D tank gunner scope view where the player experiences tank combat against enemy tanks, bunkers, and infantry, and witness the harsh reality of war on the surroundings through the scope. The 3D combat segment is not within the scope of this thesis.

#### 1.1.2 Motivation and Background

Hullbound aims to do something different with the tank simulation genre which is typically action-dominated by integrating choice-based story narration and immersive visual and audio design that instills a sense of hopelessness. The game has multiple endings affected by the player's decisions throughout the morally-deteriorating mission.

This thesis focuses on the 2D art assets of Hullbound. Specifically, the tank interior scenes, the main menu ui, and most of the promotional materials. The

assets are developed while undertaking the role of 2D artist of the game, and are the primary medium for the art-game analysis of this study.

## 1.2 Research Focus: Fine Art Traditions in Video Games

### 1.2.1 Problem Statement

Video games usually go for either photorealism or stylization for their art direction. Though there is another direction that is worth exploring, which is to deliberately use the 20th and 21st century fine art traditions as a game's visual identity.

For *Hullbound*, a narrative-driven, psychological horror tank simulation game set in a hopeless war-torn scenario, the team decided to use the visuals of found-footage horror film, glitch video art, and halftone printmaking aesthetics as our unique way of bring out the game's core themes: claustrophobia, psychological deterioration, and the material deterioration of a war-torn story. At the same time, we used the Soviet Constructivist graphic design's visual design for the promotional materials of the project as it resonates with the time setting of the project (Cold War era).

This study aims to extract the essence of the mentioned fine art traditions into the project's 2D art creation while resonating with its core identity.

### 1.2.2 Research Aim

To apply the visuals of found-footage horror film, glitch video art, halftone printmaking aesthetics, and Soviet Constructivist graphic design to the 2D tank interior scenes, main menu, and promotional materials of *Hullbound*, and to evaluate the final resulting visual identity through self-reflection and visual analysis.

### 1.2.3 Research Objectives

1. To break down the visual language of found-footage horror films and glitch video art as contemporary fine art movements, focusing on the material aesthetics of degradation, signal corruption, and video artefacts.
2. To analyse the halftone technique as a graphic art tradition of printmaking, and its role in facilitating mass production, historical documentation, and material wear.
3. To analyse Soviet Constructivism as a propaganda art poster movement, with emphasis on its use of photomontage and restricted colour palettes.
4. To develop a 2D art style for Hullbound that uses found-footage lighting, halftone and noise overlays, and a limited colour palette and poster composition based on Soviet Constructivism.
5. To implement the developed art style in the creation of the project's 2D art assets.
6. To evaluate the effectiveness and success of the developed visuals through self-reflection and comparative analysis against the studied fine art references and case study games.

### 1.3 Scope and Team Role

This thesis represents the individual work done by the researcher in the group project Hullbound, assigned the role of 2D artist. Assets developed:

- **Tank Interior Scenes:** High resolution 2D artwork of the gunner compartment and other tank interior spaces including the autoloader reloading scene and driver hatch.
- **Tank Crewmembers:** Distinct face designs, expressions, and animations for each crewmember (commander and gunner) based on the provided character settings, backstory, and developing story.
- **Main Menu:** 2D scene of the layout of a table that doubles as the main menu ui. General setting of the project is hinted at via the props present in the menu, such as a soviet military tag, a newspaper of the Berlin Wall Standoff, and a classified file on a clipboard.

- **Introduction Cutscene:** An 8-frame cutscene of the player waking up in a hospital and being given no choice but to go back into the fray, facing war once more.
- **Enemy Billboard Sprites:** 2D front-facing sprites of two of the main enemy types.
- **Core Filter:** Developed a list of filters that is applied onto all 2D art assets, using posterization, noise, halftone, gradient map, and colour overlays.
- **Promotional Materials:** Designed using Soviet Constructivism principles (bold text, photorealistic images, restricted colour palette) with the developed art processing methods applied.

Assets outside of the scope of the researcher that are excluded from this thesis include in-game HUD elements, other UIs, 3D exterior environments and models, programming, sound design, level design, and narrative writing. The game was developed by team Spaghetti Code, consisting of 4 members. This thesis only documents the researcher's individual contributions as the 2D artist.

#### 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study views video games as an artistic medium that engages and extends fine art traditions. There is not a lot of research on extracting multiple fine art branches into a single game project.

By documenting the study and application of horror video art, halftone printmaking, and Constructivist graphic design to Hullbound's 2D assets, this thesis can serve as a case study for game artists and educators that are interested in art-history-inspired visual development. It also expands the definition of "fine art traditions" within games to include glitch, film materiality, and printmaking, areas often overlooked in favor of traditional painting and sculpture.

On a practical level, the research shows how a small development team can achieve a thematically cohesive art direction by narrowing down the



inspirations via art history rather than relying on market trends or game engine defaults.

## 1.5 Thesis Structure Overview

This thesis has 6 chapters. Chapter 1 is project introduction, research focus, and the scope of study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature, establishes film, photography, glitch, and printmaking as fine art traditions, analysing relevant case study games including No I'm Not A Human, Disco Elysium, and Transistor, and constructing a theoretical framework for Hullbound's visual identity. Chapter 3 will show the design details and methodology, including the art style guide and the practice-as-research approach. Chapter 4 will be the documentation of the implementation process, and Chapter 5 evaluates the final outcome of the project through self-reflection and comparative visual analysis, then discussing limitations. Chapter 6 will finally conclude the study and recommend future work.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter establishes the academic and artistic foundations of the art direction Hullbound has developed.

The chapter will first expand the definition of fine art past just traditional painting and sculpture to photography, film, glitch, halftone printmaking, and Soviet Constructivist graphic design, each as artistic traditions with unique theory and principles instead of just stylistic preferences (Section 2.2). Second, three games that have employed fine art influences in their visual design (No I'm Not A Human, Disco Elysium, Transistor) will be analysed, learning from them and applying the knowledge to Hullbound (Section 2.3). Thirdly, this chapter will combine the acquired knowledge into a theoretical framework constructed specifically for the requirements of Hullbound: a psychological horror tank game set in the Cold War, where the 2D interior art must feel

claustrophobic, psychologically draining, and has the atmosphere of a war-torn and hopeless world (Section 2.4).

The chapter concludes by identifying the research gap this thesis fills in and defining key terms that will be looked at further in the thesis (Sections 2.5 and 2.6).

## 2.2 Expanding the Definition of Fine Art: Photography, Film, Glitch, and Printmaking

For this thesis to present that Hullbound's visual identity is built from fine art traditions, it must establish that the media techniques that are extracted (photography, film, glitch, and halftone printmaking) are fine arts. It is not a settled assumption in all of game studies, as "fine arts" are oftentimes related to just the classical traditions of painting and sculpture.

Therefore, this section will draw from art theory, media philosophy, and art history to argue that photographic grain, film degradation, signal corruption, and mechanical dot patterns are not just technical artefacts but can be considered an artistic vocabulary by itself that Hullbound's 2D art uses.

### 2.2.1 Photography and Film as Fine Art

The question of whether photography and film counts as fine art has been debated since the 19th century from Walter Benjamin to André Bazin to contemporary media theory. The consensus is they are in fact genuine artistic media with their respective aesthetic properties.

#### **Walter Benjamin and the "Aura" of the Reproduced Image**

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction by Walter Benjamin is still one of the most influential texts in modern aesthetic and political criticism, and is credited for its insightful interpretation of the role of technological reproduction in aesthetic experience (Valance & Todd, 2018). He argued that photography and film altered the nature of art, in which traditional painting possessed an "aura", a unique presence tied to its location

in time and space, the mechanically reproduced image cut this connection instead. For him, this was not a loss to be mourned but instead a liberation because the mass produced image can reach a wider audience, viewed in new contexts, and serve new social and political functions.

Benjamin's essay presented his bold thoughts on media and culture at the time. Most importantly, he did not just describe photography and film as technological trinkets, he analysed them as arts with their own properties of framing, montage, close-up, and slowmotion, that broadened human perception. The reframing is important for this thesis because if film and photography are art forms, then the material qualities of film stock including the grain, colour shifts, and its susceptibility to degradation are not technical flaws. They are instead, a part of the medium's aesthetic language. The found-footage horror visual style that *Hullbound* draws from exploits precisely these "flaws" as its tool of expression.

### **André Bazin and the Ontology of the Photographic Image**

While Benjamin was focused on the reproduced art's social implications, André Bazin (1960), a French film critic and theorist, asked a deeper, more philosophical question: what is a photographic image? In his essay *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, Bazin argued that photography fills a human psychological need, which is the desire to preserve appearance against the flow of time, what he called "mummy complex". A photograph is a transfer of reality, unlike how painting is a representation of reality. The photograph image is the object itself, irreplaceable by hand-made image.

He wrote that photography "transfers reality from the object to its reproduced form". The camera removes the human hand from the act of image-making, as it is a mechanical device. The mechanicality gives a photograph its credibility that a hand-made painting cannot summon. Bazin's argument of preservation is important for we are to look at the exact opposite: degradation. If a photograph carries the ontological weight of reality, then a degraded, corrupted, and/or decaying photograph does not just look damaged. It voicelessly screams the passage of time upon reality itself.

All the artefacts of aged film stock, the grain, the scratches, and the colour shifts, they are not just noise. They are the evidence of history, the loss of time, the evidence of duration. For a game such as *Hullbound*, set in the heat of the war where history itself seems to have broken down, the found-footage direction is a deliberate choice simulating a corrupted piece of photographic media, time-worn as it is battle-worn, our mode of expressing precisely this hopelessness and collapse. The decaying image mirrors the decaying world.

### **Combined Takeaway**

Together, Benjamin and Bazin provided the theoretical foundation for treating photography and film as fine arts, and the material degradation of these mediums as a way of artistic expression rather than just a technical defect. The following section will extend this logic to glitch art, in which the signal corruption in both analogue and digital media are deliberately (artistically) exploited.

### **2.2.2 Glitch Art and Video Art as Contemporary Fine Art**

The previous section established photography and film as fine art forms, and their material degradation as an aesthetic language. Following that, glitch art is the next logical extension as it is a deliberate and artistic exploitation of signal corruption in both analogue and digital media. This section will trace the origin of glitch art from the video art pioneers of the 1960s to contemporary new media practices.

#### **The Video Art Pioneers: Manipulating the Signal**

The artistic exploitation of video signals did not begin with the internet. It has roots in the video art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, when artists first got access to consumer video equipment and started treating the television signal as an art material instead of a transparent window to reality.

Nam June Paik, who was widely considered as the founder of video art, was among the first to recognize the expressive potential of corrupted electronic

image (Kearns & Ann, 1988). His work *Magnet TV* (1965) had him placing a large industrial magnet on a television set, causing the broadcast image to warp into abstract swirling patterns in real time. The distorted image was not a technological failure, but the artwork itself. Paik confessed that he only thought of holding the magnet in front of the television set, but it was a spectator at the exhibition that placed the magnet directly on top of it that resulted in the startling distortion. This happy accident (as Bob Ross would have said) had a takeaway, in which the artist may have set the stage for the error, the error itself still holds full power of the unpredictability.

His other works involved multiple ways of corrupting the television signal. *Participation TV* (1965) involved a microphone as an input to manipulate and change the broadcasted image, and a related work allowed the audience to speak into the attached microphone and witness the colour patterns on the screen transform based on their voice (Kurtz & Bruce, 1973). As noted in a historical entry of Paik's work, the artist used the television as an object and a social icon (Kearns & Ann, 1988). His practice created a principle that is core to glitch art, in which the "errors" of the medium, the noise, interference, and signal breakdown, are aesthetic materials, not defects to be thrown away.

More importantly, he pushed this concept even more with the development of a collaborative project, the *Paik-Abe Video Synthesizer*, with engineer Shuya Abe between 1969 and 1970. This project allowed him to produce complex feedback with brilliant colour, and nonstop mixing from multiple sources, transforming the television image entirely. This invention showed that the artist was not just distorting an existing broadcast signal anymore. They are generating entirely new electronic imagery from scratch, using the video signal as raw material as how painters treat pigments.

Bill Viola however, approached it differently. While Paik was invested in the electronic signal's materiality, Viola explored the video's potential to address existential questions (Arya, 2025). The excellent use of slow motion of his work brings attention to things commonly missed as time passes and as nature keeps going. He demonstrated that video images which were processed,

changed, and shown outside of broadcast television could evoke emotions and appreciation just as traditional painting or sculpture would. His work explored the states of birth, consciousness, suffering, and death, the cycle of human life.

Paik and Viola together established video as a form of fine art, as their work showed that the manipulation of video signals through various ways is an artistic practice instead of a technical failure. This is the foundation of Hullbound's visual identity. Like how Paik corrupted the television signal, Hullbound corrupts its 2D artworks to express the bleakness of war and the psychological deterioration of the protagonist.

### **Rosa Menkman and the Theory of Glitch Art**

The Glitch Moment(um), written by Rosa Menkman in 2011, provided an explanation of the glitch art theory. According to Menkman, the glitch (a visual artifact created when a digital signal malfunctions) is a moment of discovery rather than an error. According to her analysis, a flawlessly rendered digital image allows the spectator to look through the technology as though it were transparent. However, the viewer is abruptly made aware of the image's construction when a glitch happens. Pixels move, compression artifacts appear, and/or color channels split apart, revealing the technology itself. "The glitch takes on a different form in relation to noise, failure or the accident," Menkman writes; "it transitions between artifact and filter; between radical breakages and commodification processes"(Menkman, 2011, p. 27).

Menkman also places her work in a historical context, pointing out that the "glitch method" was already used on celluloid by director Len Lye, in Nam June Paik's video art, and in Cory Arcangel's digital art (Menkman, 2011, pp. 55–63). The history supports the claim that glitch is a continuation of a longstanding creative tradition of using media instability for expressive purposes rather than a trend in digital culture.

Hullbound can be directly adapted to Menkman's framework. The internal scenes of the tank lack the high-fidelity, fluid rendering of a photorealistic game. Instead, they are intentionally "glitched," with posterization, noise overlays, gradient maps, and color channel shifts to imitate the appearance of a

damaged CRT monitor or a distorted video video. According to Menkman's reasoning, these artifacts add to the image's core aesthetic quality instead of subtract from it. The worsened image becomes a metaphor for a game about a soldier stuck in a tank in a nuclear battlefield, seeing the environment through a gunner's scope. The player's own field of view is just as contaminated as the outside world, much as their sense of morality. In this case, the glitch is not decoration but instead the failure's visual language.

### **Michael Betancourt and the Critique of Digital Capitalism**

Michael Betancourt's (2016) *Glitch Art in Theory and Practice: Critical Failures and Post-Digital Aesthetics* offers an added analytical perspective which puts glitch aesthetics within an overall examination of digital capitalism. According to Betancourt, the importance of glitch art lies in how it can alter the smooth, formulaic interfaces of social media, advertising, and corporate graphical interfaces—the fluidity of standardized digital culture. Glitch art sets a human presence in the system by purposefully destroying these elements.

The messed up interior of the tank in *Hullbound*, of which is a "nuclear-proof" iron coffin created by the authorities and the product of military-industrial logic, can be seen as a visual denial of the cold rationalism of the machine. The equipment is interconnected with the human mind. The halftone dots, the posterized color bands, and the noise are not flaws in the image; rather, they are proof that a human hand and consciousness remain inside the tank.

### **Combined Takeaway**

Together, the early adopters of video art (Paik, Viola), the glitch theorist (Menkman), and the critical media researcher (Betancourt) provide a solid theoretical framework for recognizing signal corruption and glitch as proper types of fine art with their own critical language. From Paik's magnet-warped televisions to Viola's existential slow-motion to Menkman's theory of the glitch as an important moment of revelation to Betancourt's view of glitch art as a political critique of effortless digital capitalism, this section explored a continuous lineage. This logic will be extended to halftone and printmaking in

the following section (2.2.3), which is another tradition used by Hullbound and a medium whose material artefacts have artistic and functional value.

### 2.2.3 Halftone and Printmaking as Fine Art

Since the previous part used digital media theory and video art to trace the beginnings of glitch art, this section analyzes an analogous tradition: halftone printing. The halftone dot, a mechanically created pattern of tiny dots that mimics a continuous tone in printed images, is sometimes viewed as a technical compromise, a method used to inexpensively reproduce photographs in newspapers and magazines. This section, however, argues that halftone has its own aesthetic weight, that is made stronger by the Pop Art movement of the 1960s and is rooted in the history of printmaking as a fine art medium.

The halftone overlay used on all 2D assets in Hullbound is intended as a deliberate connection with this printmaking tradition as opposed to a retro gimmick. This makes it possible for the game to use the visual style of everyday media, mechanical printing, and documents from the past.

#### **The Origins of Halftone: Printmaking and Mechanical Reproduction**

Basically, a halftone is an optical illusion. The method, which had been designed in the late 19th century, splits a continuous-tone image (for example, a photograph) into an organized grid of multiple-sized dots. Darker tones are represented by larger dots, while lighter tones are represented by smaller dots. Newspapers, magazines, and books were able to duplicate visuals at a low cost and in large numbers since the human eye blends the dots into a smooth image when viewed at a standard distance (Meggs & Purvis, 2016).

In addition, halftone is part of a broader group of printmaking techniques that have been used for many centuries as fine art forms, alongside woodcuts, engraving, lithography, and screen printing. In many ways, the difference between "commercial" halftone and "fine art" printing is primarily historical and economic rather than artistic. Both use visual elements of dots, lines, and textures to give a sense of form; both methods need the mechanical transfer of ink to paper through a matrix. In this way, the halftone dot is just an aftereffect



to the longstanding printmaking tradition; it wasn't created in the artist's atelier, but rather with industrialization and mainstream media.

### **Roy Lichtenstein and the Upgrade of the Benday Dot**

The halftone dot, specifically the Benday dot used in comic book printing, was effectively upgraded from commercial technique to fine art language by Pop Art of the 1960s. The artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997) was the artist who contributed the most to this transformation. Lichtenstein began creating large-scale artwork in 1961 that accurately recreated the visual style of comic strips, such as speech balloons, flat areas of primary colors, thick black outlines, and most importantly, the pattern of magnified Benday dots that resembled color gradients and shading in mass-produced printed comics.

The classic example is Lichtenstein's *Whaam!* (1963). The whole piece is rendered in flat color areas mixed with the mechanical pattern of comic book printing, showing a fighter aircraft firing a missile that explodes in a flame of red and yellow. The illustration is huge (nearly four meters wide), and its visual style is based on a panel from a 1962 publication of DC Comics' *All-American Men of War*. Lichtenstein dissolved the line between "high" art and "low" commercial printing by extending this disposable, mass-produced image to the size of a classical painting. It was difficult to ignore the Benday dot, which was previously unnoticed to readers who learned to look past it to the story.

Lichtenstein's contribution to redefining the relationship between mass media and fine art is widely recognized by researchers. According to an overview from *The Art Story* (n.d.), Lichtenstein "first rose to prominence in the early 1960s as a leading figure in the new Pop Art movement in America, alongside artists such as Andy Warhol and James Rosenquist" and "his paintings, which he executed by hand but which appear to be mechanically produced, often incorporated the Benday dots used in commercial printing".

Waldman (1993, Roy Lichtenstein, Guggenheim Museum) goes on to say that Lichtenstein's approach included an ongoing discussion between the machine copied and the hand-painted, putting his work right on the border between fine

art and mass media. As per Tate's own catalogue entry for *Whaam!*, the work questions the lines between high and low culture by adopting a comic panel using the Benday dot method used for commercial printing (Tate, n.d.).

Lichtenstein's legacy gives an important model for *Hullbound*. Just as Lichtenstein took the Benday dot from its invisible role in comic book printing and turned it to the visible subject of his paintings, *Hullbound* takes the halftone dot from its original setting (newspaper photographs, military field manuals, Cold War propaganda leaflets) and then uses it as a visible, emotive layer across the game's 2D art. The halftone overlay does not just "decorate" the image; it expresses the image's relationship to a history of mechanical reproduction, to the mass discussions of war, as well as to the documentation, printing, and consumption of war.

### **The Risograph Revival and Contemporary Printmaking Aesthetics**

The resurgence of risograph in the 21st century has further revived the visual concept of halftone in art today. Created in Japan in the 1980s, a risograph is a computerized duplicating device that works in between a copy machine and a screen printer. It uses stencil-based printing technology to make prints with a special, slightly irregular texture. Risograph prints are a hit among the independent zine makers, illustrators, and graphic artists because of their vibrant, limited palettes of colors (each color requires another run through the machine), visible halftone grain, and charming registration errors (Komurki, 2017).

The risograph resurgence is important for this concept because it shows that halftone aesthetics (the visible dot, the limited palette, the mechanical imperfection) continue to have cultural value in modern art and design. They are deliberately chosen by artists who admire their texture, quality, and link to independent, self-made publishing; they are not just nostalgic remnants from a time before digital technology. In this instance, the limited lospec color palette used in *Hullbound*'s 2D assets can be viewed as a purposeful design restriction that reflects the logic of risograph and screen printing, where each color is a

separate layer, a separate pass, and a separate act of production, instead of a technical limitation imposed by hardware.

### **Combined Takeaway**

This section has established halftone as a fine art tradition with roots in the history of printmaking, promoted to iconic status by Lichtenstein's Pop Art, and revived in contemporary art through the risograph resurgence.

Therefore, the halftone overlay applied on all of Hullbound's 2D assets is an interaction with this history instead of a random filter; it is a way of combining the visual language of DIY print culture, mass media documentation, and mechanical reproduction into the game's visual identity. The halftone dot has additional meaning in the setting of a Cold War tank game where the outside world is a nuclear wasteland: it is the look of the propaganda leaflet that fallen from the sky, the field manual that instructed soldiers how to care for their tanks, and the newspaper that covered the Berlin Wall crisis. It is evidence that history has been recorded, printed, and is beginning to deteriorate, just like the world of Hullbound.

## **2.3 Case Studies of Relevant Game Aesthetics**

The previous section (2.2) laid the theoretical groundwork for photography and film as fine arts (Benjamin and Bazin), glitch and video art as contemporary fine art forms (Paik, Viola, Menkman, and Betancourt), and halftone as a printmaking tradition strengthened by Pop Art (Lichtenstein). This section now moves from theory to practice, analyzing three games (No I'm Not A Human, Disco Elysium, and Transistor) that have successfully integrated fine art elements into their visual design.

Every case study is investigated for its distinctive visual language, the fine art traditions it includes, and the knowledge it offers for Hullbound's own visual development. The three games were selected because they corresponded to different aspects of Hullbound's art application: Disco Elysium's painterly 2D portraits and their psychological and political weight, No I'm Not A Human's

direct connection with analog horror and glitch visuals, and Transistor's conceptual example of how a single art movement (Art Deco) can be thoughtfully transformed into a single game style guide, a process that this thesis emulates, though across multiple art forms.

### 2.3.1 No I'm Not A Human: Analogue Horror and Glitch Aesthetics

The visual identity of the indie horror game No I'm Not A Human comes directly from found-footage and analogue horror styles discussed in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2. The game puts the player in a suburban paranoia scenario where neighbours might or might not be human. Still, the visual presentation of the story is more important for this study than the narrative itself. The 2D scenes in the game are drawn with the unique texture of degraded VHS: the color channels drift and split, monitoring bars jitter across the screen, and the image quality varies between near-total distortion and moderate clarity. This is the primary visual language of the game, not a supplementary post-processing effect.

The game can be described as "a short horror experience where you must figure out which of your neighbors are humans"; yet, a careful visual design hides beneath the seemingly simple idea. The developer explained that the non-human neighbors do not pose a direct "threat" since "they just want to visit you to talk." The idea that the world is already broken, which is reinforced by the player's distorted and unreliable view of it, is the thing that leads to the unease instead of jump scares or disputes. According to a particular reviewer on Steam, the game's "story and worldbuilding are excellent," which "more than makes up for the short story length" (No, I'm Not a Human, n.d.). Another reviewer on Steam gave the game a 4 out of 5, praising its "beautiful use of the limitations of the PSX style" and "exceptional tension" as well as to the glitch aesthetic (No, I'm Not a Human, n.d.).

No I'm Not A Human's visual design is based on the PlayStation 1 "retro horror" resurgence, characterized by low-poly 3D rigs, texture distortion, and dithering effects. But it also provides a more aggressive layer of VHS

degradation that is distinct to analog. No I'm Not A Human goes one step further by layering the low-poly aesthetic with tracking lines, chromatic aberration, and signal noise that evoke not just an old game but also an old recording. A document that has been copied, deteriorated, and partially lost. The PSX style has limitations that ultimately become the art style itself, and independent developers have been adopting it recently. The player is never really certain whether they are viewing a corrupted piece of found film or a produced 3D scene thanks to this dual aesthetic of digital vintage and analog decay.

### **Relevance to Hullbound**

The closest example of Hullbound's visual treatment of its 2D interior scenes is No I'm Not A Human. The formal language of analogue horror, such as VHS grain, signal corruption, CRT color shifts, and a sense of seeing the world through a degraded recording device, is used in both games as an expressive tool instead of as a nostalgic affectation. The main character's paranoia and the ontological uncertainty of the world are brought out by the distorted image in No I'm Not A Human. The gunner's psychological deterioration and the actual degradation of the irradiated, disintegrating environment outside the tank are simultaneously conveyed via the distorted visuals in Hullbound.

But there's one important difference. No, I'm Not A Human only functions in analogue horror mode; the glitch is the foundation of its whole visual identity. On the contrary, Hullbound integrates its found-footage interior aesthetic with other traditions that serve distinct purposes across different asset categories, such as constructivist poster design and halftone printmaking. The lesson from No I'm Not a Human is one of principle instead of direct imitation: intentional deterioration of the image can serve as the main vehicle for horror rather than a substitute to it. The noise is the graphic itself and not an effect imposed on an image that is clear.

### **2.3.2 Disco Elysium — Painterly Portraits and Political Psyche**

Disco Elysium shows something just as important for Hullbound: 2D character portraits can express all of the emotional and political weight of a story when

they are portrayed in a loose, impressionistic approach using a limited palette. The isometric role-playing game *Disco Elysium* happens in the decrepit Martinaire neighborhood of the fictional city of Revachol. The player takes control as an amnesiac detective whose fractured mind is brought out through an internal dialogue system called the "skills," each of which is represented by a unique, expressionistic 2D portrait instead of through action or combat. Together with the game's artistic settings and textured user interface, these portraits form one of the most highly regarded visual representations in recent game history.

### **The Skill Portraits: Psyche Made Visible**

Art director Aleksander Rostov designed the twenty-four skill portraits of *Disco Elysium*, from Logic and Empathy to Inland Empire and Shivers. In a fluid, brushy, impasto-like style that feels both oil-painterly and digitally native, each painting is a bust-length character study. The faces are warped, strange, and at times horrific. They are emotional and figurative portrayals of the protagonist's inner struggles rather than literal depictions of his skills. According to the team, aesthetic considerations were always at the forefront of the studio's art team, which was initially composed of artists and draftsmen rather than video game developers (Bidmead, n.d.).

Browns, ochres, sickly yellows, bruised purples, and an unusual startling red build up the artwork's extremely limited color scheme, which blends them into a unified visual style. This restricted color scheme is a deliberate aesthetic choice rather than a fix to technical limitations. It mimics the color scheme of early 20th-century Expressionist paintings like Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka, and the Fauves, where color is forced to serve emotional truth rather than objective reality. The artists of the game were influenced by fine art painters such as Mikhail Vrubel, a Russian Symbolist whose distorted, psychologically charged figures provided a vocabulary for representing inner turmoil, and Jenny Saville, whose monumental depictions of flesh influenced the portraits' visceral physicality (Bidmead, n.d.).

Most importantly, Rostov has clarified that the team selected the isometric perspective in order to treat the entire game screen as a flat canvas. "The isometric image is wonderful in that it is flat," he said in the 2026 Noclip documentary on the creation of *Disco Elysium*. This 3D, like a million perspectives, doesn't exist. Essentially, it's just this one picture. The entire game can be designed as a painting. And we sort of did that." The group could "just plug the painterly knowledge into it, and you simply make a better isometric image," he explained. Because painting is all about analyzing the image and figuring out how to direct the viewer's gaze, make this area of the image clean, and make this area of the image extremely complex, textured, and dynamic to draw your attention to it (Macgregor, 2026).

Hullbound's tank interior scenes are static 2D compositions intended to be "read" as paintings before being traversed as game environments. This idea that the game world is a painting first and an interactive area second directly applies to these scenes.

*Disco Elysium*'s portraits are dynamic. The portrait gradually alters when the player adds points to a skill; depending on the skill's nature, it may become more intense, more lit, or more corrupted. The game's main idea that identity is a negotiation between conflicting internal voices and that the self is not fixed is reflected in this dynamism. This idea is helpful for Hullbound, when the gunner's mental health declines concurrently with the mission. The narrative and emotional center of the game is found in the crew dialogue scenes within the tank. The player's sense of psychological terror is directly shaped by the way crew members are portrayed physically, including their features, expressions, and gradual deterioration.

### **The Thought Cabinet and Textured UI**

The user interface of *Disco Elysium* incorporates its artistic logic. The player internalizes and "researches" ideas on the Thought Cabinet, a distressed, textured panel that resembles something taken out of a flooded archive. The speech boxes are painted, irregular, smudged containers rather than neat rectangles. The text itself is set against a background of faint grain and noise.

The UI of the game bears the marks of its own materiality on every surface. The team worked hard to capture Rostov's signature bold brushwork in every aspect of the game, and they produced an amazing 193 squares of 4K resolution environment textures, ensuring that the painterly quality remained consistent across every asset. The artwork has a distinctive oil-painterly style (Bidmead, n.d.).

This is important because it blurs the distinction between "art" and "interface." The user interface (UI) is not a neutral lens through which the player observes the game world; rather, it is a component of that environment and is subject to the same deterioration. The graphic style conveys the idea that the detective's mind is contaminated and wounded, just like Revachol. The visual identity of the game, with its subdued earth tones, mild surrealism, and oil-painting textures, supports the narrative's central themes of failure, grief, and the search for purpose in a broken world. This combination of narrative function, compositional intelligence, and painting skill is what critics refer to as *Disco Elysium's* artistic merit (Macgregor, 2026).

### **Relevance to Hullbound**

*Disco Elysium* provides *Hullbound* with an important example of how 2D art may convey political and psychological narrative. The game's counterpart of the detective's inner monologue is found in *Hullbound's* tank interior scenes, when the player converses with crew members and reloads the autoloader. The crew are more than just NPCs; they are mirrors of the gunner's failing sanity, voices in his thoughts, and moral demands. The player's perception of the moral significance of the decisions they must make will be strongly influenced by the way their faces are displayed, whether they look as stable, cohesive persons or as glitched, deteriorating images.

Moreover, *Hullbound's* limited lopec color scheme is directly inspired by *Disco Elysium's* usage of a constrained, emotionally charged color scheme. The palette serves as a unifying expressive tool rather than a constraint in both games. *Hullbound* employs its own limited color scheme, consisting of greens, greys, and industrial tones, to depict the icy, metallic, radioactively



contaminated environment of a tank caught in a nuclear winter, whereas *Disco Elysium* uses ochres and bruised purples to evoke a world of political ruin and personal failure. The lesson is that color is atmosphere, psychology, and argument rather than decoration.

Lastly, the artistic, textured UI of *Disco Elysium* shows that gaming interfaces don't have to be sterile. With its Soviet military tag, newspaper clipping, and classified clipboard, *Hullbound*'s files-on-a-desk main menu can adhere to this idea. The menu is the initial area the player enters; it is not a waiting area before the game starts. Before a single word of speech is read, its visual treatment. The halftone overlay, the muted palette, and the noise should make it clear that this is a world of records, documents, and deteriorating evidence. A universe in which the past has been recorded and is currently disappearing.

### **Combined Takeaway for Hullbound**

The artistic premise of *Hullbound*'s 2D interior scenes is validated by *Disco Elysium*: static 2D portraits and textured UI panels can have narrative, psychological, and political weight equal to or greater than fully animated 3D characters if they are handled with the aesthetic gravity of fine art traditions. It is not necessary to use motion-captured animation and 3D modeling for the *Hullbound* tank crew to feel authentic. They can become more than just characters; they can become expressions of the gunner's collapsing psyche if they are rendered using the same expressive, limited-palette, texture-heavy approach that *Rostov* brought to the skills of *Disco Elysium* and further degraded through the found-footage and glitch treatments covered in earlier sections.

### **2.3.3 Transistor: Art Deco as Unified Game Style Guide**

*Transistor* (Supergiant Games, 2014) offers a methodological model in contrast to *No I'm Not A Human*, which models the expressive usage of glitch, and *Disco Elysium*, which models the psychological weight of artistic 2D portraits. *Transistor* shows how a single fine art movement, in this case Art Deco, can be carefully examined, converted into a set of formal design principles, and used

throughout all of a game's visual elements to create a cohesive, cohesive brand. This part examines Transistor's visual language and, more significantly, the method by which its art director, Jen Zee, created it. This thesis duplicates this method, but it does so across several traditions rather than just one.

### **The Art Nouveau and Classical Vocabulary of *Transistor***

The cyberpunk city of Cloudbank, a bright, vertically stratified metropolis where reality is programmable, is the setting for Transistor. However, the visual identity of the game deviates from the typical cyberpunk template of trench coats and rain-soaked neon. Rather, Zee drew inspiration from the classical painters she liked and the grace of Art Nouveau. Zee stated that she "wanted to in a sense write a love letter to classical artists that I grew up really liking, like William Waterhouse or [Gustav] Klimt, or Alphonse Mucha" in an interview with Destructoid. "There's no other opportunity like the one that's right in front of you to express yourself as best you can, so I wanted to incorporate that in some way into the artwork we created for Transistor" (Hansen, 2014).

The cyberpunk conventions that the team had first contemplated were deliberately rejected. "We brought in the cyberpunk and then we decided that we didn't want any of it," Zee stated. "Everything cyberpunk was rejected by us. "No trench coats, no rain," we thought. Rather, "a lot of cyberpunk stuff actually does tip its hat to Art Deco movements," she said. That is undoubtedly present in Blade Runner. I'm shocked that Art Nouveau doesn't appear in many more video games because I myself adore it and I know that many other artists do too. I thus decided to take advantage of the chance to incorporate it into the cyberpunk genre and create something a little different, less gloomy and dismal (Hansen, 2014).

In a different interview, Zee went into more detail about her color philosophy, stating that although she finds it difficult to control her love of color, she firmly believes that muted palettes have a place and can create a mood that can support the team's slightly more intimate, serious story in Transistor. A portion of the color scheme pays homage to some of the traditional artists she adores.

Both Gustav Klimt, an artist whose intriguing shapes and flair for dramatic presentation seemed to easily blend with the cyberpunk aesthetic, and John William Waterhouse, an old favorite whose mix of subdued palette with lively atmosphere was a big inspiration. To put it briefly, she wanted to create something that was similar to Cyberpunk but with a unicorn-like sheen (The Rebel, 2013).

### **Jen Zee's Methodology: From Reference to Style Guide**

As the only 2D artist for a large portion of the production, Jen Zee oversaw Transistor's art direction. Zee's methodical approach to creating a visual identity from art-historical foundations is what makes her work very useful for this thesis, not just the caliber of the finished piece.

According to Zee, her method starts with atmosphere rather than character designs or particular assets. She acknowledged that their pre-production was somewhat careless. She loves characters, but she believed that starting with mood paintings—brief color sketches of objects intended to convey the vibe of the game—was the most organic approach. The problem with starting with a character is that it's too specific when everyone else is also looking at the game very abstractly, and when you get too specific and do things like characters or even a specific asset for the game, it can start to feel like, "Oh, here's the box that I put you all in now" (Hansen, 2014).

Hullbound can learn from this approach, which starts with general atmospheric research and gradually focuses on particular assets. It implies that the best game art direction results from an iterative conversation between broad aesthetic inspiration and the pragmatic requirements of asset development rather than from a strict pre-planned style guide enforced from the outset. The mood paintings serve as a link between game-specific application and art-historical reference, which is precisely what the mood boards discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1) did for Hullbound.

Zee also discussed the significance of a unified color scheme for the gaming world. Every asset, from character portraits to environment tiles to user

interface elements, felt like a part of the same world because to her use of a controlled, harmonized palette that included warm golds, deep teals, and subdued tones influenced by Waterhouse and Klimt. The limited lopec palette (see Section 3.2.1) fulfills the same purpose of chromatic coherence across the tank interior scenes, main menu, and promotional poster in *Hullbound*, a direct application of the palette-as-unifier approach.

### **The UI as Art Deco Object**

The way the user interface is handled is one of *Transistor*'s unique visual identities. The game's pause-and-plan fighting mechanism, the `Turn()` system, is not concealed behind simple icons; rather, it blossoms across the screen as a graphical extravaganza, with neon-bright Art Nouveau lines outlining the player's intended moving path against the darkened background. The user interface is the art, not a frame surrounding it. The files-on-a-desk main menu, which is treated with the same noise, halftone, and palette limits as the tank interiors, is the first chamber the player enters rather than a distinct screen. *Hullbound* uses this concept of interface and aesthetics in a new way.

### **Relevance to *Hullbound*: The Methodological Model**

*Transistor*'s methodological contribution to this thesis is its most significant contribution. This study adheres to Zee's methodology, which includes absorption in art-historical sources, the creation of a regulated palette, the extraction of atmosphere through ambient paintings, and rigorous application across all asset types. There is a scope difference. *Hullbound* synthesizes several traditions, including found-footage horror, halftone printmaking, and Soviet Constructivism, yet Zee works within a consistent set of influences (Art Nouveau, classical painting). Therefore, it is more difficult to extract principles from each culture, determine where they complement and conflict, and create a cohesive style guide that unites them into a single identity.

As explained in Chapter 3, the unification technique uses the noise/halftone overlay and the restricted color palette as a "common ground." *Hullbound*'s overlays guarantee that a deteriorated tank interior, a quiet desk menu, and a Constructivist poster all feel like artifacts from the same history—a history that

has been recorded, reproduced, and is now decaying—just as Zee's controlled palette and Art Nouveau sensibility ensured that a glowing UI line, a character costume, and a background skyline all felt like inhabitants of the same world.

## 2.4 Synthesis and Identification of the Research Gap

A series of theoretical and practical models have been set in previous sections. Through Benjamin, Bazin, and the pioneers of video art, Section 2.2 contended that photography, film, and glitch are valid fine art traditions with their own critical vocabularies, and that their material deterioration is an artistic language rather than a technical shortcoming. It maintained that the halftone dot bears the burden of mass media, mechanical replication, and historical documentation through Lichtenstein and the printmaking heritage.

Three games that have transformed fine art traditions into interactive visual identities were then looked at in Section 2.3. *No I'm Not A Human* showed that signal deterioration and glitches can be the main visual language of horror rather than an afterthought. *Disco Elysium* shown that the complete psychological and political weight of a story can be conveyed using 2D painting portraits with constrained color schemes and expressive brushstrokes (Bidmead, n.d.). In order to create a cohesive, cohesive brand, *Transistor* presented an approach that involved the methodical extraction of formal elements from Art Nouveau and classical painting (Waterhouse, Klimt, Mucha) and their disciplined application across every visual asset (Hansen, 2014).

When considered collectively, these instances indicate that fine art traditions can serve as the structural logic of a whole visual program rather than just being decorative allusions in games. However, they also highlight a gap. Analogue horror is the only aesthetic style in which *No I'm Not A Human* operates. *Disco Elysium* adheres to a single painting tradition (Expressionism through fine art training). *Transistor* operates inside a single synthesis of classical art and Art Nouveau. Because it pulls from a single source, the visual identity is consistent in every instance.

Hullbound is dealing with a more complicated issue. Tank interior scenes, a main menu, and promotional materials are just a few examples of the several asset categories that must comprise its visual identity. Each form of asset has a particular functional duty and draws from a different fine art history. The cramped, degraded language of glitch and discovered film is necessary for the interiors. An outward-facing visual identity that can grab attention and convey the tone of the game is necessary for the promotional materials. Between them is the main menu, a peaceful area that must seem to be a part of the same planet. Finding a unifying formal basis that keeps the project from breaking off into disparate visual voices is more difficult than just applying these traditions separately.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is little published study on the methodological synthesis of several different fine art traditions within the 2D art pipeline of a single game. The process of bringing different traditions: found footage, halftone prints, and graphic design under a single style guide has not been methodically investigated, despite the fact that specific games have been examined for their art-historical inspirations. That gap is filled by this thesis. It accomplishes this by recording the endeavor, the creation of a common color scheme, the creation of a unifying texture overlay, and the critical assessment of whether the final visual identity is coherent, rather than by claiming that the synthesis is smooth or tension-free.

## 2.5 Definition of Key Terms

The definitions of the terminology used in this thesis are listed below.

### **Found-footage / Analogue horror**

A visual style that began in horror films (The Blair Witch Project, 1999; Lake Mungo, 2008) and spread to video games, it is distinguished by the intentional replication of damaged recording media. VHS tracking lines, chromatic aberration, film grain, color channel separation, CRT phosphor glow, and framing the image as though it were taken by an actual recording device are examples of formal markers. This style is used in Hullbound's tank interior

sequences to convey claustrophobia, psychological decline, and the idea that the player's field of vision is just as compromised as the outside world.

### **Glitch Art (Noise/Grain)**

The visual artifacts of signal corruption, such as noise, compression mistakes, pixelation, and color shifts, are intentionally created or replicated as aesthetic materials in this art form, which has its roots in the video art of the 1960s and 1970s (Paik, Viola) and was theorized by Rosa Menkman (2011). Because it is deliberate, critical, and created with knowledge of the medium's infrastructure, glitch art differs from technical error. Hullbound uses gradient mapping, posterization, and noise overlays to create glitch aesthetics that mimic a deteriorated CRT TV stream.

### **Halftone**

A late 19th-century printmaking method that replicates continuous-tone images by dividing them into a grid of different-sized dots. Darker tones are represented by larger dots, whereas lighter tones are represented by smaller dots. Roy Lichtenstein's Pop Art paintings, which magnified the Benday dots of comic book printing to mammoth scale, elevated the technique to the realm of fine art. All 2D objects in Hullbound have a halftone dot overlay applied to them as a cohesive texture that echoes Cold War-era printed material culture, historical documentation, and mechanical replication.

### **Limited colour palette (Lospec)**

a limited range of colors that are applied to every 2D element in a project. The online forum Lospec.com, which lists restricted palettes for pixel art and digital graphics, is where the name "lospec" first appeared. The restricted color scheme of Hullbound is a purposeful aesthetic decision that unites the halftone and found-footage parts under a common chromatic identity rather than a technological compromise. The palette ensures that all 2D assets, from the interior of the tank to the main menu to the promotional materials, belong to the same visual world by echoing the limited inks of screen printing and the deteriorated color of aged film stock.

### **Practice-as-research**

Graeme Sullivan (2010) described a research technique in Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts where the fundamental mode of inquiry is the process of creating art. The artist-researcher does not initially theorize before producing; rather, theory develops throughout the creative process, and the final artwork and critical analysis of it make up the research output. The development of Hullbound's 2D assets is the investigation, and this written thesis is its documentation and critical critique. This thesis employs a practice-as-research methodology.

## **2.6 Chapter 2 Conclusion**

The theoretical, practical, and methodological basis of Hullbound's visual identity have been developed in this chapter. It has defended that photography, film, glitch, and halftone are acceptable fine art traditions whose material aesthetics, such as the mechanical dot, signal corruption, and grain, can be purposefully used as an expressive expression in game art. Three case study games that demonstrate various aspects of this employment have been reviewed: No I'm Not A Human, which uses analog horror and glitch as the main visual language; Disco Elysium, which shows how painterly 2D portraits and textured user interface can have psychological and political significance; and Transistor, which provides a methodological example of applying formal principles from art-historical references (Art Nouveau and classical painting) to all assets in order to create a cohesive identity. It has defined the key phrases that serve as the framework for the subsequent chapters and indicated the research gap, which is the unrecorded synthesis of several fine art traditions within a single game's 2D pipeline.

These foundations will now be translated into a precise design specification and approach in Chapter 3: a unified art style guide that unifies a limited lospec palette, halftone texture overlays, and found-footage interior art into a single, cohesive visual program for Hullbound.



### 3.0 Design Specification & Methodology

In Chapter 2, the theoretical underpinnings were established and pertinent case examples were examined. These principles are translated into a specific action plan in this chapter. There are two primary portions to it. The first (3.1) discusses the methodological approach, practice-as-research, and shows why the development of Hullbound's 2D art assets is a legitimate research method.

The unified art style guide, the project's primary design specification, is presented in the second section (3.2). The style guide outlines the visual guidelines that apply to all of the material types created by the researcher, including the promotional poster, the main menu, and the scenes inside the tank. It describes how the disciplined use of a restricted color palette, noise and halftone texture overlays, and a common approach to lighting and composition combine the fine art traditions covered in Chapter 2—found-footage/glitch and halftone printmaking—to create a cohesive visual identity.

#### 3.1 Methodology: Practice-as-Research

This study uses a practice-as-research methodology, which is a framework where the fundamental mode of inquiry is the act of creating art. The phrase "practice-as-research" (also known as "practice-based research" or "artistic research") refers to a method of inquiry where critical reflection and creative production are integrated processes rather than distinct phases. The researcher develops theoretical understanding through the iterative process of creating, testing, and improving the work rather than first formulating a theory and then using actual work to explain it.

Graeme Sullivan's *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts* (2005) serves as the basic text for this approach in the visual arts. In contrast to scientific or humanities-based research, Sullivan contends that creative practice can produce knowledge in ways that are just as legitimate. The artist-researcher works in what Sullivan refers to as a "visual arts research environment" in which the artwork itself, along with the documentation of its creation, serves as the research output and the studio becomes a location of experimentation.

"According to Sullivan, "the creative and intellectual work done by artists is a form of research that involves the creation of new knowledge that is individually and culturally significant."

Sullivan lists a number of traits of practice-as-research that directly relate to this theory. First of all, it is reflexive: the researcher continuously evaluates the procedure and modifies the work based on new information. Second, it is situated: rather than being abstracted from the project's particular context, the knowledge generated is embedded inside it. Thirdly, it is multimodal; rather than favoring one over the other, it alternates between producing and writing, drawing on visual, verbal, and material forms of knowledge. These qualities translate into a mode of operation in the Hullbound scenario where the researcher:

1. **Determines the creative traditions to be used** (found-footage/glitch, halftone printmaking) and uses the literature research and reference collection to analyze their formal characteristics (Chapter 2).
2. **Creates a style guide** (this chapter, Section 3.2) that codifies the formal concepts taken from those traditions into a set of rules controlling color, texture, lighting, and composition.
3. **Produces the assets**: tank interior scenes, main menu, promotional poster, etc within the constraints of the style guide, iterating and refining based on ongoing critical reflection (Chapter 4).
4. **Evaluates the outcomes** to which the synthesis of traditions was successful or unsuccessful through reflective evaluation and comparison with the original references and case studies (Chapter 5).

As mentioned in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4), modern game artists are increasingly serving as "bridges" between digital technology and conventional artistic disciplines, which is consistent with the larger area of game art research. The practice-as-research framework is especially appropriate for a project where the artist-researcher is attempting something that has not been systematically documented, such as the synthesis of several historically distinct fine art traditions within the 2D pipeline of a single game, rather than just applying existing techniques.

## 3.2 Art Style Guide for Hullbound 2D Assets

The main design specification of this thesis is the art style guide that is provided in this part. It outlines the visual guidelines that control the creation of every 2D asset that falls under the purview of the researcher. The limited color palette, the noise/halftone overlay, and the five-stage processing pipeline that guarantees all assets are built from the same material logic are the overarching principles that unify the three asset types—tank interior scenes, main menu, and promotional poster—around which the guide is organized.

### 3.2.1 Overarching Principles: Palette and Texture Overlay

Hullbound uses a single, uniform image-processing pipeline to create all of its 2D assets, including tank interiors, the main menu, and promotional posters. The pipeline creates a repeatable technical process from the fine-art traditions of discovered footage and halftone prints (Chapter 2). There are five steps to it:

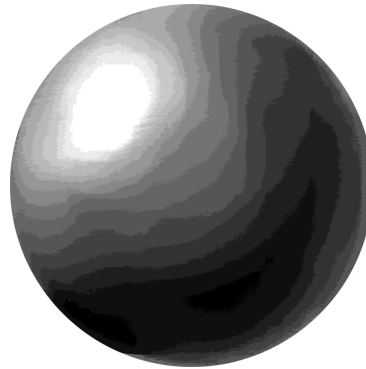
#### A. Greyscale



**Figure 3.1:** Sphere in Greyscale

Every asset's foundation artwork is first created as a simple greyscale painting. At this point, the artist can focus on value structure, light logic, and composition without being distracted by hue by working without color. Every lighting choice, including the poster's striking contrast, the menu's warm desk lamp, and the tank's interior's subdued CRT glow, is made in greyscale. The greyscale image acts as a blank canvas for the subsequent gradient-mapping and posterization processes.

## B. Posterize



**Figure 3.2:** Sphere in Greyscale, Posterized

By posterizing the greyscale image, the continuous tonal range is reduced to a predetermined number of discrete value bands. This phase introduces the sudden tonal jumps that are typical of both cheap print reproduction (where continuous tone is impossible) and damaged video signals (where dynamic range is compressed). Additionally, posterization ensures that colors are assigned to distinct value zones rather than being uniformly blended, preparing the image for the gradient map. The number of bands is adjusted to correspond with the lospec palette gradient map's possible steps.

## C. Noise and Halftone Overlays



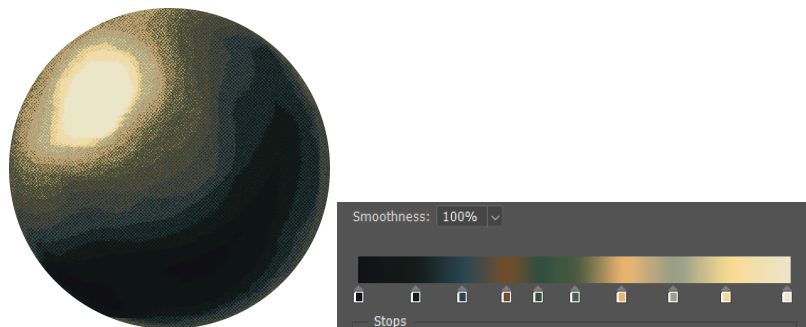
**Figure 3.3:** Sphere in Greyscale, Posterized, With Halftones and Noise Overlays

The posterized image is covered with a uniform texture overlay made up of a halftone dot pattern and film grain (noise). The halftone overlay adds a mechanical dot pattern that resembles the Benday dots of commercial printing and the Lichtenstein Pop Art tradition covered in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.3),

while the noise overlay replicates the grain structure of high-ISO film material. When combined, they show the materiality of print and photographic media. The halftone dots impose a mechanical regularity while the grain softens the posterized bands' sharp edges. The result is an image that appears to have been printed and photographed at the same time—a record from a deteriorating archive.

The overlay is composited directly into the high-resolution 2D artwork, guaranteeing exact control over its intensity, rather than being applied as a post-processing effect in the game engine. Although the strength varies depending on the type of asset (heavy for interiors, lighter for promotional posters), noise and halftone are required in every 2D work. According to Chapter 2's theory, this overlay serves as the main means of coordinating the project's visual identity.

#### **D. Gradient Map with Lospec Palette**

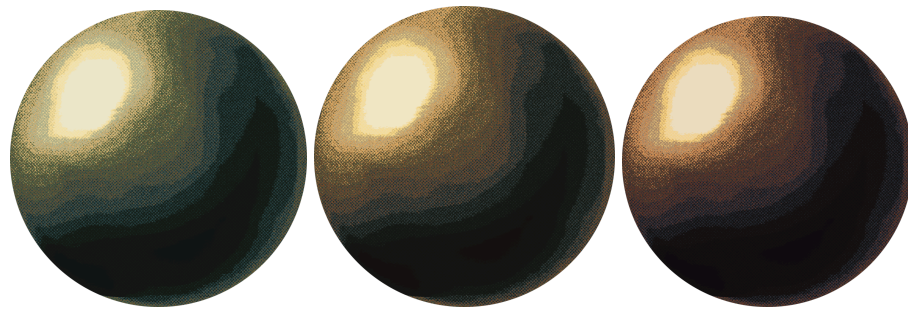


**Figures 3.4 & 3.5:** Sphere in Greyscale, Posterized, With Halftones and Noise Overlays, Gradient Map Applied and the Gradient Map Itself

The textured, posterized greyscale image is subjected to a gradient map using the limited lospec palette chosen for the project. Each value band made during the posterization process is given a particular color from the palette by the gradient map: dark tones correspond to near-black and deep brown, mid-tones to rust, industrial greens, and muted grey-blue, and highlights to off-white and sickly yellow-green. This guarantees that the complete image is constructed using the limited range of colors derived from damaged film stock and documents from the Cold War era.

Lospec.com, an online community resource for limited palettes, was used to choose the palette. There are several uses for the limited palette. In order to avoid visual fragmentation, it first unifies the project: an asset rendered for the interior of the tank and an object rendered for the promotional poster share the same chromatic identity. The limited inks of wartime printing, the color-shifted tones of deteriorated film, and the striking contrasts of documentary photography are just a few examples of the particular historical and material settings that Hullbound explores. Third, it serves as an aesthetic constraint in line with Jen Zee's deliberate limitation theory, which holds that limitations inspire creative decision-making, as well as the risograph resurgence.

#### **E. Colour Tint (Per-Asset Adjustment)**



**Figures 3.6, 3.7 & 3.8:** Processed Spheres Tinted in Green, Orange, and Red

Lastly, a global color tint is used for particular scenes or objects as a contextual alteration. The main menu desk lamp has a warmer cast, the promotional poster has a cooler or neutral bias, and the tank interiors have a tiny shift toward green to mimic the CRT phosphor lighting. The tint is the last step, which permits each asset type to have its own atmospheric temperature while guaranteeing that the underlying image stays tied to the unifying palette and texture treatment. A Color Balance adjustment layer in Photoshop is used to apply the tint, which modifies the overall color balance by a tiny, precise amount.

#### **Conclusion**

The theoretical synthesis presented in Chapter 2 is technically expressed in this five-stage pipeline: greyscale, posterize, noise/halftone overlay, gradient map

with lospec palette, and color tint. Within a single, repeatable technique, it unifies the different aesthetic languages of found-footage (grain, posterization, CRT tint), halftone printmaking (dot pattern, restricted inks), and screen-printing/risograph practice (limited palette via gradient map). The pipeline maintains the functional uniqueness of each content type while enforcing visual coherence throughout the tank interiors, main menu, and promotional materials by processing all 2D assets in the same order.

The following sections (3.2.2-3.2.4) describe how this pipeline is customized for each asset category, changing simply the direction of the final color tint or the intensity of specific stages rather than the core sequence itself.

### 3.2.2 Tank Interior Scenes

#### **Function and Content**

The main story area of Hullbound is the internal scenes of the tank. As the gunner, the player may see inside the T-279 heavy tank, use point-and-click to move between compartments, reload the autoloader, and converse with the driver and commander. These scenes are high-resolution, two-dimensional images. The visual style must accomplish two goals at once: it must depict the crew's and the subject's psychological decline as the mission descends into nuclear horror, as well as the physical claustrophobia of the tank interior (the cramped space, the mechanical hardware, the dim lighting).

#### **Visual Language: Found-Footage and Glitch**

As proposed in Chapter 2 (Sections 2.2.1–2.2.2), found-footage/analogue horror is the predominant fine art tradition used for the interior scenes. This means that the pictures are handled like recordings—that is, as footage taken by an actual equipment and then deteriorated—rather than as clear windows into a fictional universe.

The entire five-stage pipeline is followed in the interior scenes:

- **Greyscale:** All value relationships, lighting, and composition are established in the base picture. Instrument panels, indicator lamps, and the dim glow of a CRT-style display are the main sources of the

low-key, artificial illumination. High contrast and little mid-tone detail are produced when highlights are blown out (overexposed) and shadows are crushed (lost to black).

- **Posterize:** Six to eight distinct value bands are used to posterize the greyscale image. This introduces the sudden tone leaps that are typical of degraded surveillance footage, which has a reduced dynamic range.
- **Noise and Halftone Overlay:** A halftone dot pattern and a lot of noise (film grain) are combined. The halftone adds the mechanical regularity of print, while the grain gives aging film stock its texture. The combination alludes to an image that is both a record and a recording, something that was taken and then stored away.
- **Gradient Map with Lospec Palette:** The value bands are assigned the limited colors by the gradient map. Near-black and charcoal are used for the darkest bands; industrial greens and subdued greys are used for the midtones; off-white and sickly yellow-green are used for the highlights.
- **Color Tint:** To simulate the phosphor cast of a CRT display, a light color tint is applied based on object type (red, green, or orange). The interior scenes are characterized by this tint, which sets them apart from the menu and poster in an ambient way while staying within the same pipeline.

### **Composition**

The composition is tight and cramped. The tank's gear, including the autoloader system, levers, and dials, is packed into the frame. The close-up shots of the crew members force an awkward intimacy because their faces take up a large amount of the frame. Because there is no parallax scrolling, the compositions are static, which emphasizes the feeling of being stuck in the gunner's seat.

These official decisions are not made at random. They are inspired by the storyline of the game: the player is a gunner in a tank meant to survive a nuclear explosion, and the interior's visual language depicts the gradual irradiation of everything, including the crew, the metal, and the recording media itself.



### 3.2.3 Main Menu

#### **Function and Content**

Hullbound's main menu is a two-dimensional image of a desk seen from above or at a small angle. A confidential dossier on a clipboard, a Soviet military identity tag, and a newspaper clipping about the Berlin Wall Standoff are all on the desk. Typewritten text on the document, the menu options are included into this scene. The menu is the first "room" the player enters; it is not a distinct interface panel.

#### **Visual Language: Continuity with the Interior**

The five-stage pipeline used to process the tank inside scenes is also used to process the main menu:

- **Greyscale:** Determines the low-key lighting and desk composition.
- **Posterize:** Use the same number of bands as the interiors.
- **Noise and Halftone Overlay:** The level of the noise and halftone overlay is somewhat lower than that of the interiors. The necessity for menu intelligibility is weighed against the grain and halftone dots, which are nonetheless easily discernible. Textural coherence with the inside of the tank is guaranteed by the overlay.
- **Gradient Map with Lospec Palette:** Using the same palette, dark desk surfaces are mapped to deep brown and charcoal, paper objects to off-white, and accents to subdued industrial tones.
- **Colour Tint:** Elements are tinted slightly differently from the interior of the tank as atmosphere is prioritized more in this scene.

The file, newspaper, and tag are arranged in a little asymmetrical, diagonal composition on the desk, giving the menu a subtle visual dynamism without deviating from the muted ambiance of the interior world. The bold, monospaced font used in the file and tag's typography is reminiscent of military paperwork. The menu is subject to the same deterioration as the interior of the tank and is handled as a document from the archive.

### 3.2.4 Promotional Poster

#### **Function and Content**

The project's external representation is the Hullbound promotional poster. It must capture attention in a busy visual environment (internet shops, social media, exhibition displays) and convey to a potential audience the identity of the game: psychological horror, Cold War tank combat, narrative-driven. According to the FYP guidelines, the poster is designed in a vertical, portrait position (A2).

### **Visual Language: Bold Graphic Design within the Unified Pipeline**

Through the same five-stage pipeline, the promotional poster's aggressive, high-contrast graphic design approach accentuates the game's thematic elements—the tank, the crew, and the radioactive wasteland—while staying firmly integrated into the project's cohesive style.

The poster's final tint and intensity are adjusted using the same procedure as the other assets:

- **Greyscale:** Creates an eye-catching, dynamic composition. In order to convey a sense of movement and urgency, the main visual element: a crew portrait, is depicted at a huge scale.
- **Posterize:** To ensure the same tonal logic as the interior scenes, apply the same band count.
- **Noise and Halftone Overlay:** Applied at a lower intensity than the interiors is the noise and halftone overlay. In the bigger flat-colored sections, the grain and halftone dots are evident, but they don't overpower the graphic legibility needed for advertising. The key link to the in-game look is this light overlay, which adds a subtle materiality that keeps the poster from appearing like a pure, independent object.
- **Gradient Map with Lospec Palette:** The same palette is employed, but with a warning red as highlight. The poster is directly linked to the in-game assets by the palette.
- **Colour Tint:** Modified to maintain a cold, documentary atmosphere consistent with the game's tone.

Thus, the advertising poster serves as the project's public face while its private face deteriorates. The audience is drawn in by the graphic design's boldness; the halftone dots and roughness allude to what is within.

### 3.3 Tools and Software

The 2D assets for Hullbound are produced using the following software:

- **Adobe Photoshop (primary tool):** Greyscale painting, posterization, noise and halftone compositing, gradient map application, and color tint correction are all five process stages. The iterative practice-as-research method depends on Photoshop's layer-based, non-destructive workflow (adjustment layers, blending modes, smart filters), which enables the researcher to play around with posterization band counts, overlay intensities, and tint values without permanently changing the original artwork.
- **Krita (secondary):** Used to create the key art (albeit accidentally) while the researcher tried to explore a different software.

To guarantee quality on PC monitors, all assets are created at a high resolution (3840x2160 pixels minimum).

### 3.4 Evaluation Method

This thesis does not use a formal questionnaire or playtesting survey, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Two complementary techniques are used to assess the visual identity:

1. **Self-reflection in relation to the style guide:** Every finished asset type is evaluated critically in relation to the style guide's guiding principles (Section 3.2). The investigator queries: Did the inside sequences of the tank accomplish the defined found-footage/glitch aesthetic? Did the inner scenes make sense in relation to the main menu? Did the advertising poster effectively use a daring graphic design strategy while preserving a visual connection to the in-game elements? Was the intended material unity achieved by applying the five-stage pipeline consistently? Chapter 5 has documentation of this reflection.

2. **Comparative visual analysis:** The finished products are positioned next to the case study games and reference photos that were examined in Chapter 2. Stills from found-footage movies and *No I'm Not A Human* are contrasted with screenshots of the interior of the tank. The promotional poster is contrasted with documentary design materials and other game posters. The study pinpoints locations where the translation was successful as well as those where it failed or created unanticipated conflicts.

The researcher's own critical analysis, carried out within the practice-as-research framework, is the main evaluative weight; informal feedback obtained during supervisor consultations, when available, is highlighted as anecdotal support (Sullivan, 2010).

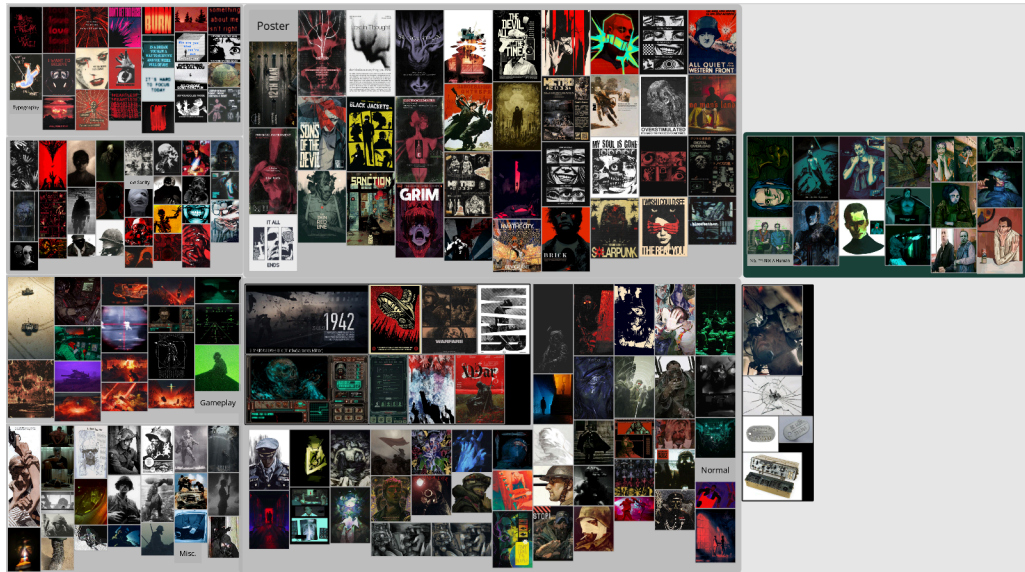
## 4.0 Design & Implementation

The art style guide, a set of formal guidelines and a five-step processing pipeline that controls color, texture, lighting, and composition in all of Hullbound's 2D assets, was established in Chapter 3. The application of that guide is documented in this chapter. The tank interior scenes, the main menu, and the advertising materials are the asset kinds that fall under the researcher's purview, and it shows how they were created step-by-step. Each section shows how the fine art traditions covered in Chapter 2—found-footage/glitch and halftone printmaking—were transformed into tangible artistic choices by following a representative asset through the five-stage process.

The production pipeline serves as the framework for the chapter. The pre-production stage, including the mood boards and reference collection that influenced the visual direction, is described in Section 4.1. The construction of a representative tank interior scene is described in Section 4.2. The main menu is documented in Section 4.3. The promotional poster is documented in Section 4.4. The additional assets created are briefly mentioned in Section 4.5. Throughout, the focus is on demonstrating how the theoretical ideas were translated into real-world decisions—that is, how the five steps changed a pristine greyscale painting into a final image that was degraded, textured, and palette-restricted.

### 4.1 Pre-Production: Mood Boards and Visual References

The researcher created a thorough collection of visual references that matched each fine art tradition found in the literature review before any asset development started. Throughout the production process, these references were arranged into mood boards, which are collections of pictures that act as ongoing visual aids. By giving tangible examples of the lighting, color, texture, and composition that the style guide defined in words, the mood boards served as a useful link between the theoretical study in Chapter 2 and the style guide in Chapter 3.



**Figure 4.1:** Main Moodboard for Hullbound

### **Found-Footage and Analogue Horror References**

Horror films were the main inspiration for the found-footage mood board. Stills were gathered for their use of low-light camera aesthetics, degraded video, and arranging the image as though it were taken by a real-world recording device. The visual artifacts of VHS degradation, including as horizontal tracking lines, color channel separation at high contrast edges, and the way highlights bloom and bleed into surrounding portions of the frame, were given special attention. As stated in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.2), these artifacts are expressive materials rather than technical defects; Hullbound would use this visual language of degradation for its tank interiors.

This board also featured screenshots from No I'm Not A Human, which is the closest game predecessor currently in existence for the particular fusion of low-poly aesthetics from the PSX era with analogue terror deterioration (see Section 2.3.1).

### **Halftone and Printmaking References**

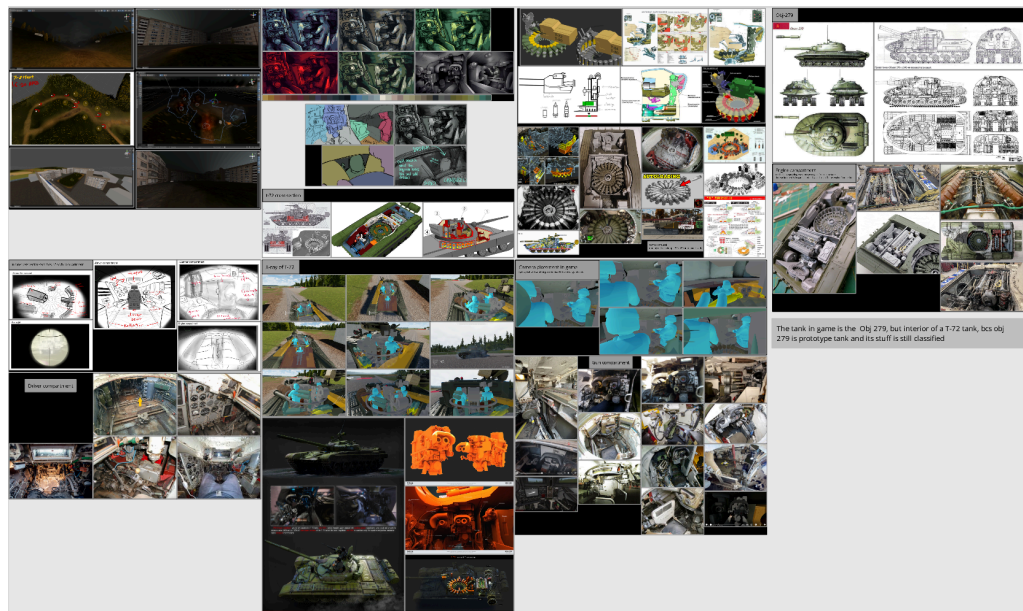
Examples of Benday dot patterns in various contexts and scales were gathered for the halftone mood board. Whaam! by Roy Lichtenstein (1963). The main source showed how the expanded halftone dot may serve as an expressive, visible texture instead of an imperceptible method of reproduction.

Photographs from newspapers from the Cold War era were also gathered, including pictures of the Berlin Wall, Soviet tanks, and film of nuclear tests on inexpensive newsprint. Hullbound's overlay design was directly influenced by the way halftone dots interacted with the coarse paper grain of newsprint, resulting in a mixed texture of mechanical reproduction and material degradation.

### Game Art and Cinematic References

The mood board featured screenshots from the case study games examined in Chapter 2 in addition to the fine art customs. Stills from Transistor (Supergiant Games, 2014) were gathered for their regulated color schemes and integration of interface with environment, while stills from Disco Elysium were gathered for their painterly 2D portraiture and textured user interface. These game-specific allusions were useful benchmarks for the conversion of fine art concepts into interactive 2D elements.

### Documentary and Military References



**Figure 4.2:** Supplementary Moodboard for Hullbound

Documentary photos of Soviet tank interiors, military records from the Cold War, identification tags, and confidential papers were gathered for an additional mood board. In order to keep the fictitious universe of Hullbound rooted in

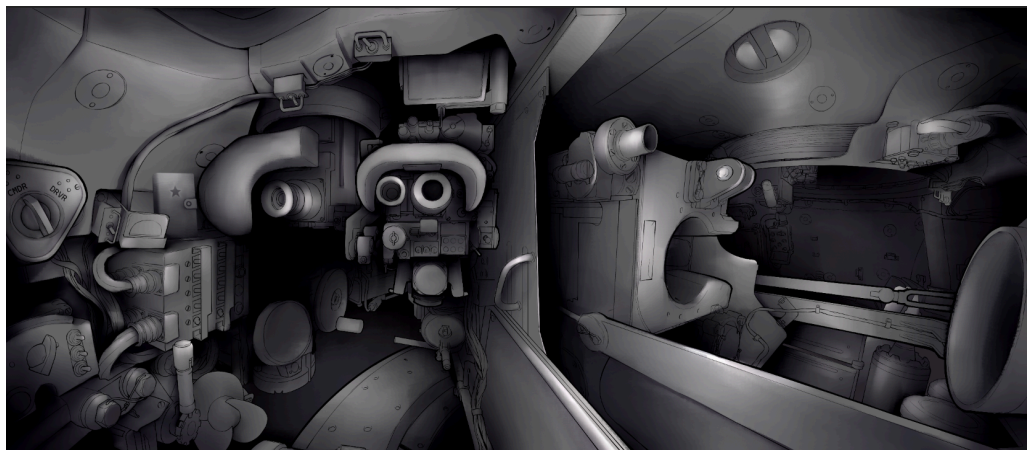
period-authentic material culture, these influences influenced the particular items and elements that can be found in the main menu and the interior of the tank, such as the dials, levers, and paper textures.

## 4.2 Asset Production: Tank Interior Scene

The gunner compartment, which is the player's main point of view during the game, is the inside scenario of the tank chosen for thorough documentation. The gunner's seat, the main cannon's breech, instrument panels, and, in the particular form recorded here, the commander visible through an open hatch or communication port are all included in the scene. For point-and-click navigation, the scene is represented as a static 2D illustration. The five-stage pipeline's application to this asset is detailed in the sections that follow.

### 4.2.1 Step 1: Clean Digital Painting

The asset started out as a crisp, grayscale digital painting created using Adobe Photoshop at a 3840 x 2160 pixel (4K) quality. Without the distraction of color, the painting established the basic composition, lighting, and value relationships.



**Figure 4.3:** Greyscale painting of the gunner compartment. Flat values, no colour, no overlays.

The style guide's claustrophobic principles (Section 3.2.2) served as the foundation for the composition. The lower portion of the frame is dominated

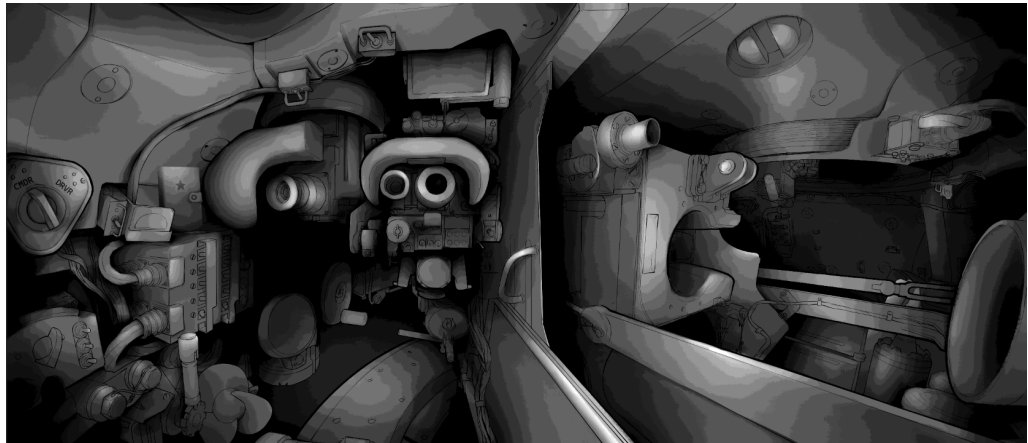


by the cannon's breech, while the upper sides are crowded with dial-equipped instrument panels. Partially hidden by gear, the commander can be seen in the backdrop. A single main light source, the glow of an instrument panel, produces harsh, directed shadows across the metal surfaces, making the illumination unnatural and low-key. Shadows were pushed toward near-black, while highlights were painted at the top of the value range. The stage is a metal coffin, but the lighting is not naturalistic; instead, it adheres to the idea that light should be treated "more like stage lighting than sunlight" (Hansen, 2014), as Jen Zee stated in reference to *Transistor*.

#### 4.2.2 Step 2: Posterize

Photoshop's Posterize adjustment layer was used to posterize the greyscale image, limiting its continuous tonal range to seven discrete value bands. This phase introduced the sudden tonal jumps that are typical of both bad print reproduction, where continuous tone is impossible, and degraded video signals, where dynamic range is constricted by the recording medium.

The posterization created a stepped, graphic image from the greyscale painting's smooth gradients. The instrument panel glow's gentle falloff turned into a sequence of unique rings. On the cannon breech, the slow change from shadow to highlight developed into a series of distinct planes. This effect, which mimics the constrained latitude of surveillance cameras and military recording devices, is not a defect; rather, it is the initial step in creating the found-footage aesthetic.



**Figure 4.4:** Posterized greyscale image, showing banded tonal transitions across the gunner compartment.

### 4.2.3 Step 3: Noise and Halftone Overlays

According to the style guide (Section 3.2.1), the third step introduced the texture overlays, which serve as the main unifying mechanism of the project's visual identity.

#### **Noise Overlay**

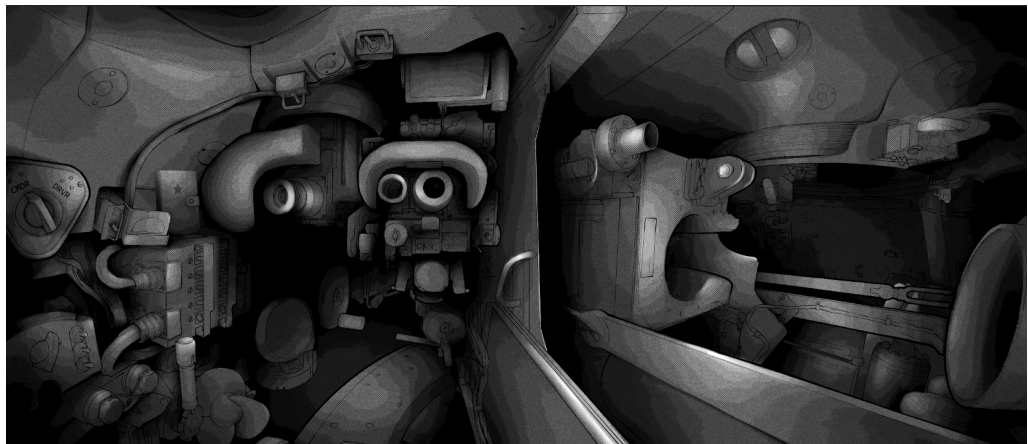
Photoshop was used to create a layer of homogeneous film grain, which was then placed as an overlay layer using the Overlay blending mode at 100% opacity. In order to replicate the texture of high-ISO 35mm film material, the grain scale was set so that it would be noticeable at full resolution without overpowering the underlying picture. This procedure instantly changed the image's character: the posterized painting's flat, crisp color fields took on the texture of a recorded medium. As the grain broke up the borders, the sharp transitions between value bands relaxed a little.

#### **Halftone Overlay**

Using Photoshop's Bitmap mode, a 50% grey fill layer was converted into a bitmap with a round dot pattern at a frequency of about 15 lines per inch to produce a custom halftone pattern. The final dot pattern was added back into the main page as a layer with an opacity of about 30% and set to Multiply blending mode. A second order of texture that was different from the noise

grain was introduced by the halftone dots. The halftone was mechanical and uniform, resembling the texture of industrial printing, while the grain was organic and chaotic, resembling the texture of chemical film. Together, the two textures created the compound effect outlined in the style guide: the image appeared to be both a print and a photograph, a recording and a record.

The interaction between the grain and the dot grid produced a faint moiré-like interference pattern in several mid-tone regions. This artifact was purposefully kept since it reflects the erratic behavior of analog media and is consistent with Menkman's (2011) description of the glitch as a "moment" of material revelation.



**Figure 4.5:** Gunner compartment with noise and halftone overlays applied. The film grain and mechanical dot pattern are visible, particularly in the mid-tones.

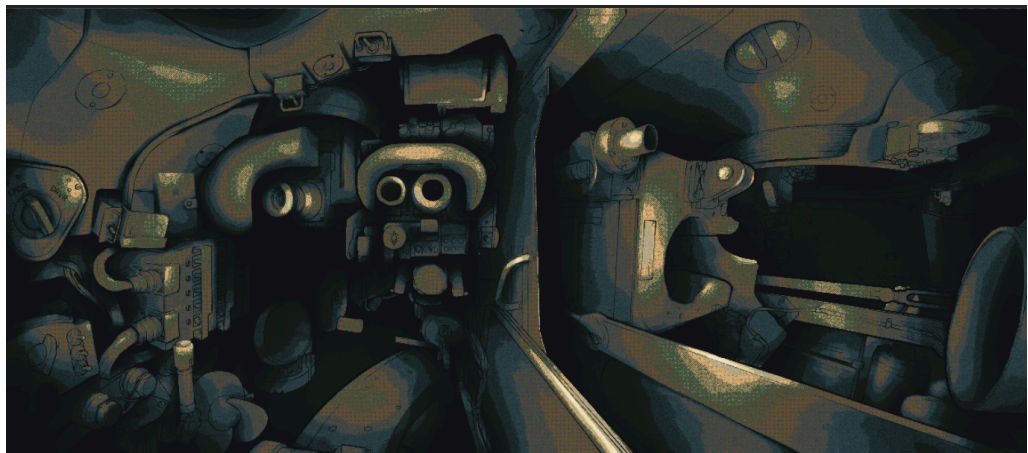
#### 4.2.4 Step 4: Gradient Map with Lospec Palette

The fourth stage used a Gradient Map adjustment layer to add color to the textured, posterized greyscale image. The limited lospec palette chosen for the project was used to create the gradient map (see Figure 3.5 for the complete swatch).

Every pixel in the image is guaranteed to be drawn only from the limited palette thanks to the gradient map approach. Outside of the specified swatches,

no color exists. Because all assets are processed using the same gradient map, this ensures chromatic coherence with all other assets in the project.

This step had a transforming effect. The textured, greyscale image, which had previously read like a deteriorated photograph or a printed document, suddenly took on a distinct chromatic identity: it was industrial, frigid, and slightly sickening. As the style guide intended, the palette evoked the color-shifted tones of old film material and the limited inks of wartime printing.

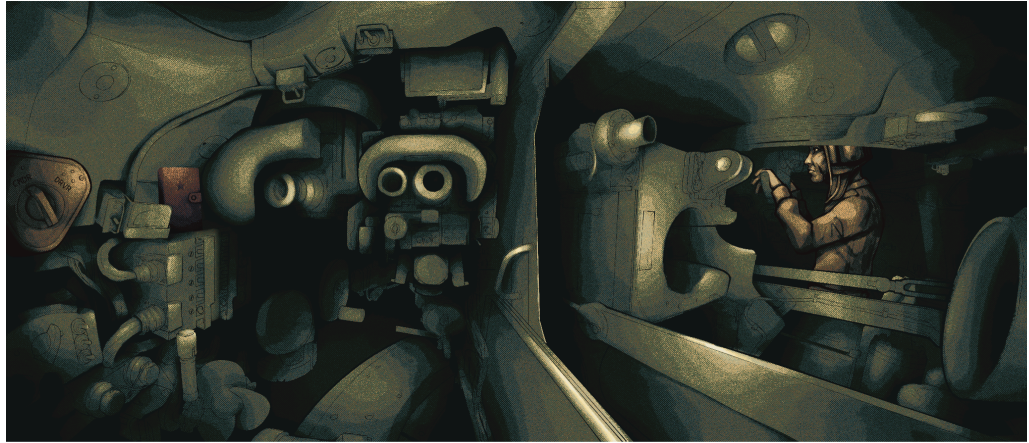


**Figure 4.6:** Gunner compartment after the gradient map application. The image is fully coloured based on the lospec palette.

#### 4.2.5 Step 5: Colour Tint

A global color tint was added at the end of the typical pipeline. The image was gently moved toward green using color overlay layers. This tint mimics the greenish glow of old cathode-ray screens, known as the phosphor cast of a CRT monitor.

It has a faint tint. It offers a cold, electronic atmosphere that sets the tank inside apart from the neutral poster and the warmer main menu without overpowering the color scheme or making the image monotone green. According to the style guide (Section 3.2.2), the tint is the interior scenes' last atmospheric feature. Separate orange and red tints are applied to interactive items.



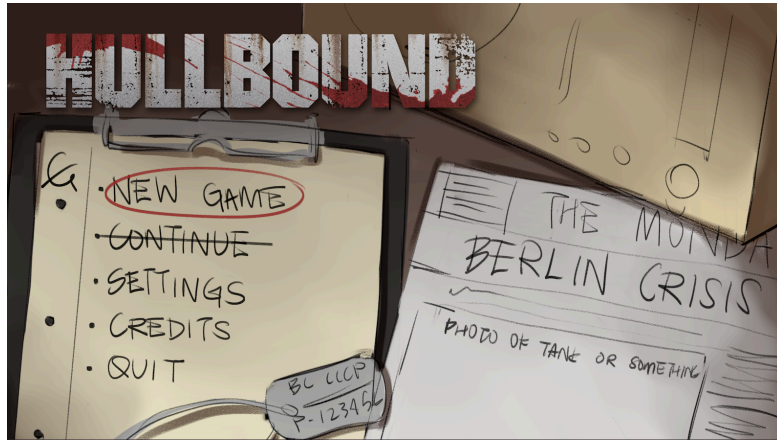
**Figure 4.7:** Green CRT color tint applied to the gunner compartment scene. The image has undergone all five phases of processing.

### 4.3 Asset Production: Main Menu

The main menu was created as a single two-dimensional composition that showed a desk from a slightly upward perspective. Before the player enters the tank, the items on the desk: a Soviet military identity tag, a newspaper clipping about the Berlin Wall Standoff, and a document on a clipboard, were chosen to create the scene, tone, and thematic issues of the game.

#### 4.3.1 Step 0: Concept Painting and Composition

The menu started with a rough digital painting of the desk surface and the individual items. After being painted individually, each item was combined with the desk background. The file is positioned at the bottom left, the newspaper is positioned at the lower right, and the military tag is positioned between them in an asymmetrical, slightly diagonal composition.



**Figure 4.8:** Initial desk composition with military tag, newspaper clipping, and classified file.

#### 4.3.2 Step 1-5: Full Pipeline Application

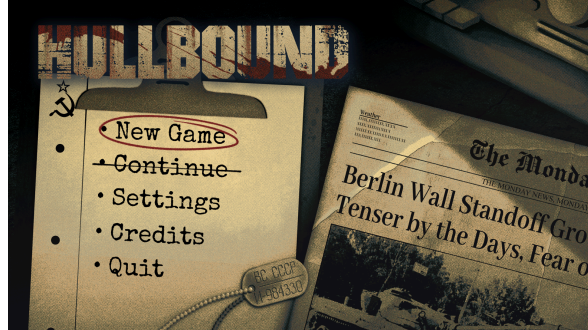
The menu composition was created using the same five-stage pipeline, with the modifications listed in the style guide (Section 3.2.3):

- Greyscale Adjustment Layer: The main menu art began with colour, so a greyscale filter was added to reverse engineer the process.
- Posterize: Seven bands that guarantee the same tonal logic as the interior scenes.
- Noise and Halftone Overlay: Applied at a somewhat lower intensity than the interiors, the noise and halftone overlay have an opacity of about 50% and 25%, respectively. This maintained the integrated menu text's legibility while maintaining the interior's textural coherence.
- Gradient Map: The dark desk surfaces were mapped to charcoal and deep brown, the paper items to off-white, and the metallic tag to subdued grey tones using the same lospec palette.
- Color Tint: To mimic the illumination of a desk lamp, a faint warm tint was applied. While being within the same visual family, this warmth sets the menu apart from the interior's green CRT tint.

#### 4.3.3 Typography Integration

The objects incorporated the menu options: New Game, Continue, Settings, Credits, and Exit. The bold, monospaced, sans-serif font used in the typography adheres to the style of military paperwork. The example of Disco

Elysium's Thought Cabinet, where the UI is an item inside the art rather than a frame surrounding it, provides the basis for this integration of interface and environment (see Section 2.3.2).



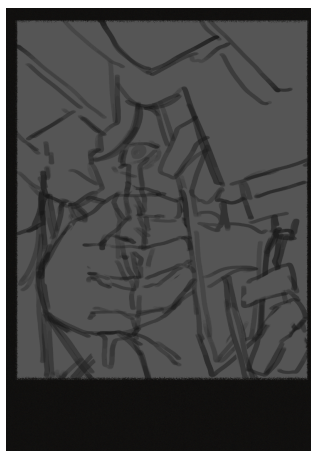
**Figure 4.9:** Result of Main Menu art

#### 4.4 Asset Production: Promotional Poster

According to the FYP guidelines, the promotional poster was created in a vertical, portrait orientation (A2). Through the shared five-stage pipeline, it uses a bold, high-contrast graphic design approach that enhances the game's thematic themes while staying integrated within the project's cohesive style.

##### 4.4.1 Step 1: Greyscale Composition

The poster began with a greyscale composition built around a dynamic diagonal axis. The central visual element of a tank gunner being held by multiple hands was rendered at a large scale to create a sense of dread.



**Figure 4.10:** Greyscale poster composition.



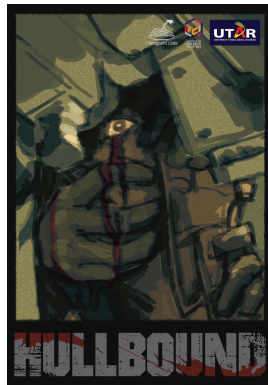
#### 4.4.2 Steps 2–5: Pipeline Application with Poster-Specific Adjustments

The following modifications were made to the five-stage pipeline in accordance with the style guide (Section 3.2.4):

- **Posterize:** The same seven bands as the other items.
- **Noise and Halftone Overlay:** The dots and grain are noticeable, but they don't affect the graphic readability needed for advertising.
- **Gradient Map:** A warning red was added to the same lospec palette.
- **Colour Tint:** Tinted accordingly based on the element in the art.
- 

#### 4.4.3 Typography

The composition incorporated bold and uppercase lettering. HULLBOUND, the title of the game, was placed along the central diagonal in a big scale. With military and industrial overtones suitable for the game's theme, the font is clear and easy to read from a distance.



**Figure 4.11:** Final promotional poster with light noise/halftone overlay, neutral tint, and bold typography

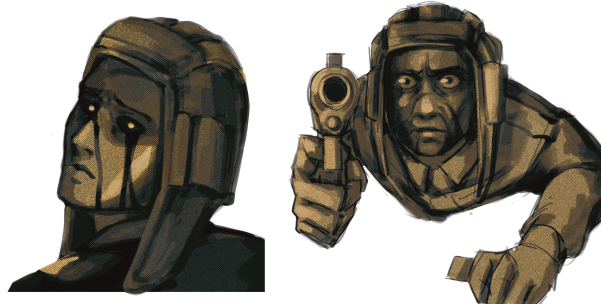
#### 4.5 Supplementary 2D Assets

Using the same five-stage procedure, the researcher created a number of other 2D assets in addition to the three main asset types mentioned above. Since they fall under the scope described in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3), they are briefly mentioned for completeness.



### Crew Member Portraits

The commander and driver each had unique face designs with a variety of expressions that reflected their own story arcs. To make sure the portraits read as residents of the same degraded visual realm as the tank interior, they underwent the entire processing pipeline, including greyscale, posterize, noise/halftone overlay, gradient map, and green CRT tint.



**Figures 4.12 & 4.13:** Crewmembers Alexei & Voron

### Introduction Cutscene

The same five-stage workflow was used to create an 8-frame sequence that showed the player waking up in a hospital and being taken back to the front. To keep the in-game appearance consistent, each frame was processed separately.



**Figure 4.14:** A Frame from the Intro Cutscene

### Enemy Billboard Sprites

In order to maintain visual coherence between the game's 2D and 3D parts, these sprites were processed using the same pipeline even though they were intended to appear in the 3D scope-view combat scenes (which are outside the researcher's primary purview).

### **Core Filter**

This core filter ensures that any upcoming materials created for Hullbound will automatically inherit the same visual treatment by encapsulating the pipeline, which includes posterization, noise, halftone, gradient map, and color tint. The creation of this filter, which represents the codification of the technique into a transportable technical instrument, is a useful result of the practice-as-research process.

## **4.6 Integration**

The game engine did not apply the noise, halftone, posterization, gradient map, and color tint effects in real time; rather, they were incorporated into the final image files at the asset production stage. This guaranteed that the researcher had complete control over the assets' visual quality and that they would look the same independent of the player's hardware.

This brings an end to Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will use comparative visual analysis and self-reflective critique to assess the deployed assets in relation to the style guide and reference traditions.

## 5.0 Discussion and Evaluation

In accordance with the five-stage pipeline and art style guide developed in Chapter 3, Hullbound's 2D assets were implemented step-by-step in Chapter 4. These results are now assessed in this chapter. It is divided into four parts. Each asset type is evaluated critically in Section 5.1 in relation to the style guide's guiding principles, with a focus on the pipeline's efficacy and consistency. A comparative visual analysis is carried out in Section 5.2, where the finished assets are positioned next to the reference photos and case study games examined in Chapter 2. The study's shortcomings are acknowledged in Section 5.3, both with regard to the assets and the evaluation process. In Section 5.4, the practice-as-research process is examined, along with the lessons learned and potential applications of the technique.

### 5.1 Evaluation Against the Style Guide

A five-stage processing pipeline—greyscale, posterize, noise/halftone overlay, gradient map with lospec palette, and color tint—was described in the art style guide (Section 3.2), along with instructions on how each asset type should adjust the intensity of specific stages to achieve different atmospheric temperatures while preserving visual coherence. Each asset type is assessed in this section in relation to those requirements.

#### 5.1.1 The Five-Stage Pipeline: Overall Effectiveness

It is important to evaluate the pipeline as a unifying mechanism before analyzing specific asset kinds. The pipeline was intended to integrate halftone printmaking (dot pattern, restricted inks) and found-footage aesthetics (grain, posterization, CRT tint) into a single, repeatable operation. It was the technical manifestation of the theoretical synthesis presented in Chapter 2.

The pipeline worked well in a number of ways. It imposed uniformity first. No asset could unintentionally deviate from the project's visual language because each one was treated in the same order: greyscale → posterize → noise/halftone → gradient map → tint. The pipeline served as a gatekeeper, automatically inheriting the proper palette, texture, and tonal logic for every

new content after it had completed the five phases. This was especially helpful in a collaborative setting where the researcher created assets over a long period of time and had to make sure that the earliest and last painted assets would read as belonging to the same environment.

Second, a unique material signature was produced by the pipeline. Posterization, film grain, and halftone dots created a composite texture that is difficult for conventional game post-processing effects to replicate. The assets appear to have undergone a particular series of material processes, such as painting, printing, photographing, and decaying, which reflects the game's story of recording and deterioration rather than being subjected to a generic "retro" filter.

Third, each asset type was able to have its own atmospheric temperature while still clearly belonging to the same family thanks to the pipeline's flexibility, which allowed the intensity of particular phases (overlay opacity, tint direction) to be changed without changing the core sequence. The practical mechanism that allowed for the synthesis of several traditions was this modularity.

However, the pipeline's rigidity in the face of some edge circumstances was a drawback. For instance, in order to match the night-vision aesthetic of the 3D scope view, the enemy billboard sprites needed a slightly different treatment. Additionally, the pipeline's fixed sequence needed to be manually adjusted, which increased the risk of inconsistency. The gradient map was reweighted, and the tint was shifted more aggressively toward green. This implies that retrofitting assets created for a different visual context is more difficult; the pipeline functions best when the entire visual program is developed around it from the beginning.

### 5.1.2 Tank Interior Scenes

The interior sequences of the tanks were the most difficult to realize and the main location where the found-footage/glitch tradition was used.

### **Greyscale and Posterization**

The low-key, cramped lighting described in the style guide was effectively achieved by the greyscale stage. The crushed blacks, the severe directional shadows, and the instrument panel glow all contributed to the story's sensation of enclosure. The sudden tonal jumps typical of deteriorated footage were introduced via the posterization into seven bands. While genuine to the found-footage aesthetic, the banding occasionally drew attention to itself as an effect rather than blending in subtly with the image in certain places, especially the transition between the cannon breech and the background. A well-known conflict in glitch aesthetics is that the malfunction must be noticeable enough to be interpreted as deliberate without becoming overpowering.

### **Noise and Halftone Overlay**

The desired complex texture—organic and mechanical, photographic and printed—was created by combining halftone dots with noise grain. The image has the materiality of film stock since the grain is plainly seen at full resolution. At 15 lines per inch, the halftone dots are discernible in the midtones without overpowering the picture. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.3), the faint moiré interference between the grain and the dot grid was purposefully kept and adds to the impression that the image has several analogue processes.

During integration, a practical drawback of the overlay approach emerged: the halftone dots become less noticeable on smaller displays or at lower resolutions, and the grain may seem as basic image noise rather than film texture. The balance between the optimal viewing conditions and the practicality of PC gaming is an inherent conflict in designing for varied display sizes.

### **Gradient Map and Colour Tint**

The entire image was successfully restricted to the lospec palette by the gradient map. The final chromatic identity expressed the intended mood of a degraded military recording: cold, industrial, and slightly sickening. Subtly adding the electronic cast without overpowering the palette was the green CRT

tint. The hue works best in the image's darker regions, where the greenish shadow mimics the distinctive light of a cathode-ray tube in a dimly lit space.

### **Composition**

It was possible to create the cramped, hardware-dominated composition. The lower frame is occupied by the cannon's breech, while the peripheral is crowded with dials and panels. The commander's partial obscurity highlights how tough it is to communicate with those inside the machine. The feeling of being stuck in the gunner's seat is accentuated by the motionless viewpoint. The narrative and tonal objectives of the game are successfully served by this piece.

#### **5.1.4 Main Menu**

Three criteria were used to assess the main menu: overall atmospheric coherence, intelligibility of the integrated menu selections, and textural consistency with the interior images.

### **Continuity of Texture**

The menu was successfully connected to the interior scenes by using the same five-stage pipeline with a moderate overlay intensity. The desk appears to be a peaceful area inside the same deteriorating archive, an extension of the same visual reality. The menu is a desk, not the interior of a tank, so the continuity is not smooth in a literal sense. Instead, it is textural, with the grain and the dots serving as the desired common ground.

### **Legibility**

At full resolution, the menu options integrated into the objects were readable. The background items are suitably contrasted with the bold monospaced typeface.

### **Atmospheric Coherence**

While staying within the same visual family, the warm desk-lamp color effectively sets the menu out from the interior's green CRT cast. The menu feels like a moment of peace at a desk before going into the iron coffin because of the warmth. The menu's liminal desk serves as a psychological bridge between the actual world (the player's desk) and the game world (the interior of the tank), creating a subtle but powerful atmospheric distinction.

#### 5.1.4 Promotional Poster

The style guide's requirements for bold visual design inside the unified pipeline were used to assess the promotional poster.

##### **Composition**

The intended sensation of movement and urgency was produced by the dynamic composition. As is necessary for promotional communication, the composition is eye-catching.

##### **Pipeline Integration**

The poster was successfully connected to the in-game look through the use of the five-stage pipeline with halftone overlays and light noise. The poster's graphic intelligibility is unaffected by the grain and dots, which are evident in the bigger flat-colored parts. The cold, documentary atmosphere that is fitting for the tone of the game is maintained by the neutral color tint. The poster appears to be a publicly accessible document from the same archive as the interior of the tank; it is a propaganda poster that has been handled, printed, and is starting to exhibit the same deterioration as the classified file on the menu desk.

##### **Typography**

The bold, uppercase, font is appropriate and readable. As anticipated, the title HULLBOUND takes center stage in the composition. The militaristic and industrial overtones of the typeface complement the game's environment.

##### **Tension Between Boldness and Degradation**

The poster still has a residual conflict that was mentioned in the style guide: the noise/halftone overlay pulls toward materiality and decay, while the powerful graphic design pulls toward clarity and impact. The poster is both a self-assured public declaration and a deteriorating document, indicating that the two impulses are not entirely resolved. This tension is seen by the researcher as constructive rather than detrimental. It reflects the central theme of the game, which contrasts the self-assured rhetoric of the state with the deteriorating reality of the troops imprisoned within the machine. An honest visual representation of Hullbound's story is the poster's subtle uneasiness, the roughness that undercuts the assertiveness.

## 5.2 Comparative Visual Analysis

The final Hullbound assets are examined against the studied items. The objective is to determine areas of convergence and divergence as well as the extent to which the fine art traditions were successfully translated.

### 5.2.1 Tank Interior vs. Found-Footage and No I'm Not A Human

The similar visual vocabulary: the grain, blown highlights, crushed shadows, and color shifts, is visible when the interior of a Hullbound tank is positioned next to a deteriorated VHS still. The Hullbound image appears to be a member of the same family of deteriorated recording mediums. But the topics are very different. The found-footage movies show domestic or outdoor environments, such as homes, suburban streets, and forests, where the horror arises from the contrast between the damaged image and the familiar backdrop. The claustrophobia of the technology itself is the source of the horror in Hullbound's industrial, mechanical atmosphere. In this setting, the glitch aesthetic serves more as a sign of technological failure than a sign of supernatural incursion.

The interior of Hullbound is less obviously glitched than that of No I'm Not A Human. No I'm Not A Human degrades the image to the point that it is occasionally almost unreadable. Hullbound avoids this extreme by maintaining sufficient clarity such that the player can read the crew's facial expressions and



operate the point-and-click interface. This is a practical compromise: the demands of interactivity must coexist with the visual appeal of glitch. Overall, the balance achieved is suitable for a game where character interaction and dialogue play a major role.

### 5.2.2 Main Menu vs. *Disco Elysium* Thought Cabinet

The Hullbound main menu's incorporation of user interface (UI) into a real-world scene (files on a desk) reflects the idea of *Disco Elysium*'s Thought Cabinet, in which the UI is an item in the world rather than a frame. The sterile, separate menu screen convention is rejected in both designs. But compared to the Thought Cabinet, the Hullbound menu is quieter. With painted, smudged textures and a color scheme that changes according to the mood of the game, *Disco Elysium*'s user interface is incredibly expressive. The Hullbound menu is more subdued, using halftone overlays and noise instead of artistic gestures to suggest materiality. This restraint is more of a distinct tonal choice than a failure because it is in line with the project's overall aesthetic, which is the cold, mechanical atmosphere of the tank.

### 5.2.3 Promotional Poster vs. Game Poster Design

The Hullbound poster's textured style makes it stand out when compared to other independent game posters. The majority of game posters are flawless, glossy digital designs. The halftone dots and delicate grain of the Hullbound poster add a physicality that is uncommon for internet stores. The viewer's acquaintance with the found-footage style will determine whether this materiality is perceived as "degraded" or just "textured," but even in the absence of that background, the texture provides the poster a tactile quality that sets it apart from its competitors.

### 5.2.4 The Pipeline as Distinguishing Factor

The five-stage pipeline itself is the subject of a more general comparative investigation. While individual effects like noise, color grading, and

posterization are frequently used in games, it is less typical to systematically combine all five stages into a set order. While games that employ posterization typically do it for a cel-shaded or comic-book feel, those that use noise typically do so as a subtle film-grain post-process. The particular mix of posterization followed by noise and halftone followed by gradient map in the Hullbound pipeline results in a visual character that differs from all of the reference games. This uniqueness is partly proof that this thesis's attempt to synthesize traditions resulted in something that is more than just a copy of its roots.

### 5.3 Limitations of the Study

It is important to recognize a number of the study's shortcomings.

#### **Evaluation Methodology**

Without formal player input or outside professional review, the evaluation is based on introspection and comparative visual analysis. This is in line with the practice-as-research approach (Sullivan, 2005), however it implies that the conclusions are the researcher's critical evaluation and might not apply to the opinions of a larger audience. Although it was not possible given the project schedule and team structure, a formal playtesting session with questionnaires intended to gauge players' reactions to the visual identity would have reinforced the review.

#### **Static Format Limitations**

The static 2D format reduces the effectiveness of the glitch effects. Real glitch art frequently depends on motion and the unpredictable nature of the glitch as it develops over time, as seen in Paik's work, video installations, and dynamic gaming effects. Hullbound captures the appearance of signal degradation but not its behavior by freezing the glitch into a still frame. This was an acknowledged trade-off from the beginning of the project and is an intrinsic limitation of the 2D static asset format.

#### **Integration Between 2D and 3D**

As stated in the scope (Section 1.3), the thesis solely concentrates on the 2D assets. However, there are 3D scope-view fighting parts throughout the entire game that are outside the researcher's purview. This study did not assess the visual relationship between the 2D inside and the 3D exterior, including if a stylistic gap is perceived or whether the found-footage/glitch style continues throughout the changeover. This is a major drawback because the coherence of both areas affects how the player perceives the visual identity of the game overall. This 2D/3D integration could be further studied in the future.

### **Pipeline Rigidity**

As mentioned in Section 5.1.1, the five-stage pipeline proved to be quite rigid for edge situations, which are assets that have to be treated differently to match the night-vision aesthetic of the 3D scope view. Extending the pipeline to other asset types necessitated human adjustment, which increased the risk of inconsistency because it was created for the 2D interior and menu. This implies that future applications should incorporate explicit protocols for handling edge circumstances and that the pipeline is best viewed as a strong default rather than an unbreakable rule.

## **5.4 Reflection on the Practice-as-Research Process**

The development of the 2D assets served as the mode of inquiry in this study's practice-as-research technique, which was successful in a number of ways but also presented difficulties.

### **What the Process Enabled**

The research was able to stay rooted in the particular material realities of game art development thanks to the approach. The actual activity not only demonstrated but also tested the theoretical claims made in Chapter 2 on the validity of glitch as art, halftone's expressive potential, and the materiality of damaged media. When a halftone overlay was applied to a posterized greyscale image, for instance, tensions that were not expected in the theoretical debate were quickly revealed: the halftone's varying visibility at different resolutions and the moiré interplay between dot and grain. These findings are unique to

practice-as-research, according to Sullivan (2005), and they could only have been made.

Additionally, a productive discipline was instilled by the methodology. Working within the five-stage pipeline's constraints—the required posterization, the defined palette, and the universal overlays—promoted creative decision-making in ways that an open-ended approach would not. Jen Zee's statement that "limitations are what make art interesting" was validated by this (Hansen, 2014).

### **Challenges Encountered**

The methodology's main obstacle was having to constantly switch between writing and creating between the paper and the project. Critical reflection must be continuous rather than retrospective, according to the practice-as-research concept. This necessitated a discipline of documentation (keeping iterative versions of assets, documenting decisions as they were made), which occasionally felt at odds with the flexibility of the creative process. In order to capture decisions and reflections in the moment rather than reconstructing them afterward, the researcher might benefit from creating a more structured system of process documenting from the beginning of future studies, such as a visual research diary.

The creation of the five-stage pipeline itself presented a second difficulty. The pipeline evolved constantly, with the researcher experimenting with several effect sequences before deciding on the final order. In one early version, the gradient map was applied before the noise, which lessened the impact of the palette; in another, the noise overlay was placed before posterization, which caused the grain to be somewhat lost in the banding. The final sequence was found by trial and error, and while the process was valuable as research, it took time that could have been used to produce more assets. Recognizing that the pipeline itself is a research result that needs its own process of refinement, future practitioner-researchers using a similar methodology should budget time for this iterative pipeline development.

### **What Was Learned**

The research showed that it is possible to combine the found-footage and halftone printmaking traditions into a single game's 2D graphics pipeline, and that the five-stage pipeline offers a reliable way to achieve material and chromatic uniformity across different asset types. It also showed that there would always be trade-offs in the synthesis: between materiality and graphic impact, between deterioration and readability, and between the requirements of each culture and the needs of the game. These compromises represent the essence of the creative process that the thesis sought to describe; they are not failures.

Lastly, the project confirmed the importance of game art direction's art-historical foundation. The choice to base Hullbound's visual identity on certain, well-researched fine art traditions—such as found-footage horror and halftone printmaking—and to convert those traditions into a methodical technical pipeline resulted in a visual program that is logical, inspiring, and defensible. Every aesthetic decision made in the game's 2D assets has a theoretical basis, and the researcher feels that this transparency is a sign of a developed artistic approach.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The study concludes with this chapter. The work completed and the assets generated are summarized in Section 6.1. The research findings, which address the research question from Chapter 1, are presented in Section 6.2. Recommendations for further research are provided in Section 6.3, both for Hullbound in particular and for the wider implementation of the technique created in this thesis.

### 6.1 Summary of Work

This study used the psychological horror tank game Hullbound from the Cold War as a vehicle to examine the use of fine art traditions in video games. As a 2D artist on the Spaghetti Code development team, the researcher was in charge of the game's tank interior scenes, main menu, promotional poster, and additional 2D assets like crew member portraits, an introduction cutscene, enemy billboard sprites, and the creation of a core filter that captured the project's five-stage processing pipeline.

Chapter 2 laid the theoretical groundwork by arguing that photography, film, and glitch are acceptable fine art traditions and that their material degradation is an aesthetic vocabulary rather than a technical flaw. This argument was made through Walter Benjamin, André Bazin, and the pioneers of video art. It also contended that the halftone dot bears the burden of mechanical replication and historical record through Roy Lichtenstein and the printmaking lineage. The use of these and related traditions in three case study games—No I'm Not A Human, Disco Elysium, and Transistor—was examined, offering useful models for Hullbound's own visual growth.

These theoretical underpinnings were converted into a concrete graphic style guide in Chapter 3, which was structured around a single five-stage processing pipeline: posterization, gradient mapping with a restricted lospec color palette, noise and halftone overlays, greyscale painting, and a per-asset color tint. In order to ensure material and chromatic coherence throughout all asset types, including tank interiors, the main menu, and promotional posters, this pipeline was created to reconcile the different aesthetic languages of found-footage

horror and halftone printmaking within a single, repeatable workflow. According to Sullivan's (2005) framework, in which the act of producing constitutes the inquiry, the technique was characterized as practice-as-research.

The five-stage pipeline was applied step-by-step to a representative tank interior scene, the main menu, the promotional poster, and the additional assets in Chapter 4. Visual figures were used to explain each step, from the first greyscale painting to the final color tint, showing how the abstract ideas became tangible creative choices.

Chapter 5 used comparative analysis and introspection to assess the results. The synthesis of traditions was found to be largely successful, with each asset type achieving its intended aesthetic and the limited palette and texture overlay effectively unifying the disparate asset types. However, it also acknowledged limitations, such as the static 2D format limiting the impact of glitch effects, the main menu's legibility being slightly compromised, and the promotional poster's residual tension between Constructivist clarity and found-footage degradation.

## 6.2 Conclusion of Research

How may found-footage aesthetics and halftone printmaking textures be integrated under a single, limited color palette to produce a unified, thematically relevant visual identity for Hullbound's 2D assets? was the research topic given in Chapter 1.

The answer is that such a synthesis is possible through the methodical use of a shared processing pipeline, as shown by the practical effort and critical thought recorded in this thesis. The method by which the different aesthetic languages of found-footage horror and halftone printmaking were reconciled was supplied by the five-stage pipeline: greyscale, posterize, noise/halftone overlay, gradient map with lospec palette, and color tint. The pipeline served as a structuring logic as well as a technical workflow, ensuring that all assets, regardless of their nature or purpose, underwent the same material processes and developed the same textural and chromatic identity.

The restricted color scheme, which was applied consistently through the gradient map, functioned as the chromatic constant for every asset. The textural constant was the noise and halftone overlays, which were applied in varying intensities. Together, they produced a visual world where the main menu, the promotional poster, and the tank inside all read as artifacts from the same deteriorating archive despite having different functional responsibilities and climatic temperatures. The menu's warm desk lamp, the poster's neutral coolness, and the interior's green CRT tint all contributed atmospheric distinctiveness without undermining the overall coherence.

Additionally, the study showed that art-historical grounding offers a stronger basis for game art direction than market trend-following or intuitive "stylization." Each significant aesthetic choice in Hullbound's 2D assets may be linked to a certain fine art tradition with its own critical theory: the halftone to Lichtenstein, the glitch to Menkman and Paik, and the printmaking lineage. Instead of limiting creativity, this grounding offered a framework that allowed for the confident and fact-based defense of creative decisions. This method provided a way for a small development team to create a visually unified brand without the resources of a large firm.

A contribution to game art practice is the pipeline itself, which consists of the particular order of posterization, noise, halftone, gradient map, and tint. While many games employ individual effects, it is less typical to systematically combine all five stages into a set, recurring sequence intended to synthesize certain fine art traditions. This process was codified into a transferable technological tool with the creation of the core filter, a reusable collection of Photoshop adjustment layers and smart filters. This pipeline could be used or modified in future projects to combine many artistic traditions.

Lastly, the study supports the more general claim that video games are a valid medium for the preservation and evolution of fine art traditions. The interior of Hullbound's tank is not a painting, a photograph, or a movie; rather, it synthesizes the aesthetic vocabulary of all three through a digital pipeline to create something unique to the interactive medium. Modern game artists are increasingly serving as intermediaries between conventional artistic disciplines



and digital technology. One such bridge, from theory to practice to evaluation, has been thoroughly detailed in this thesis.

## 6.3 Recommendations for Future Work

The suggestions fall into two groups: those that are unique to *Hullbound* and those that apply to the technique as a whole.

### 6.3.1 Recommendations for *Hullbound*

#### **Extend the Aesthetic to the 3D Scope View**

The visual gap between the 2D interior and the 3D scope-view combat areas is the biggest drawback of the current approach. The player experiences both sections as a single game, although the scope view was outside the researcher's purview. *Hullbound*'s future development should look into ways to incorporate the found-footage/glitch aesthetic into the 3D scope view. This may be done by applying real-time post-processing effects to the 3D render that mimic CRT degradation, chromatic aberration, and film grain. This would enhance the immersive horror of the game and unify the visual experience across the 2D/3D split.

#### **Dynamic Glitch Effects**

The appearance of signal degradation is captured by the static glitch effects used during high-stakes narrative situations, but not its behavior. Future versions of the game may have dynamic glitch effects that trigger during particular narrative events, such as animated tracking lines, real-time color channel shifts, and frame tearing, if the technology allows. This would increase the emotional impact of these moments by bringing *Hullbound*'s glitch aesthetic closer to the analogue horror cinema legacy and the moving-image predecessors of Paik's video art.

#### **Expand the Asset Library**

One promotional poster, staff photos, and a representative collection of interior shots are all part of the current implementation. A larger content collection, including more tank compartments, crew expressions and animation frames, and other promotional materials, would be necessary for a full commercial release. A blueprint for increasing production while preserving visual consistency is provided by the five-stage pipeline and the core filter described in this thesis. Any new asset that passes through the core filter will automatically inherit the proper palette, texture, and tonal logic.

### 6.3.2 Recommendations for the Broader Methodology

#### **Apply the Pipeline Model to Other Art Movements**

This thesis's methodology, which identifies fine art traditions, extracts formal principles, builds a uniform processing pipeline with a shared palette and texture overlay, and applies across asset types, is not unique to the traditions used in Hullbound. Other combinations of art movements could be synthesized using the pipeline model. A science fiction game might combine Brutalist materiality and De Stijl abstraction, while a fantasy game might create a pipeline built on Art Nouveau adornment and Pre-Raphaelite color. This thesis's documentation of the portable pipeline architecture serves as a foundation for upcoming artist-researchers.

#### **Incorporate Formal Player Evaluation**

This study's evaluation was restricted to comparative analysis and self-reflection. Formal player feedback—questionnaires, structured interviews, or playtesting sessions intended to determine whether the intended aesthetic is perceived and whether the synthesis of traditions is felt as coherent or fragmented by an external audience—would be beneficial for future projects using this methodology. This would improve the practice-as-research framework's evaluative component.

#### **Document Process in Real Time**

The researcher discovered that it was more challenging than expected to recreate creative choices for Chapter 4 in retrospect. In order to record decisions and reflections as they happen, future practitioner-researchers are encouraged to set up an organized process documentation system from the beginning of the project, such as a development blog, dated iteration saves with remarks, or a visual research journal. This would lessen the strain of retrospective reconstruction and result in richer documentation.

### **Design Pipelines with Edge Cases in Mind**

For assets that weren't part of the basic categories (tank interiors, menu, poster), the five-stage pipeline proved to be a little rigid. To increase the pipeline's versatility without compromising its unifying logic, future pipeline designers should incorporate explicit protocols for addressing edge circumstances, such as different tint presets, configurable overlay intensities, or modular pipeline stages that may be rearranged for particular asset categories.

## **6.4 Final Remarks**

This thesis documented a persistent effort to regard video game art as a site of real artistic inquiry, that is, as a place where the aesthetic vocabulary of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries might be reassembled, degraded, and given new life rather than as a commercial commodity to be styled. Hullbound's tank interior, with its posterized bands, film grain, halftone dots, and sickly CRT glow, is a pixel-by-pixel argument that video games are a medium capable of using the fine arts, which are a living collection of tools rather than a closed canon.

That argument was developed using the five-stage pipeline (greyscale, posterize, noise/halftone, gradient map, and tint), which is documented here as a contribution to the expanding field of game art research. The researcher believes that other educators and game artists who share the belief that art history and game creation are partners in the continuous process of creating meaning through pictures will find value in this documentation.

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## 8.0 Appendices

### 8.1 FYP1 Logbook

| Project Paper Consultation Logbook |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Project Title                      | HULLBOUND         |
| Student Name                       | Yap Mei Ying      |
| Student ID                         | 2204775           |
| Year/Semester                      | Year 3/Semester 1 |
| Supervisor                         | Ts Dr Ang Kok Yew |

| WEEK 01                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |              |   |      |   |      |  |              |  |      |                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---|------|---|------|--|--------------|--|------|---------------------|
| <p><b>Comments:</b></p> <p>Group forming : Spaghetti Code<br/>           4. Lee Kong, Then Yee Hen, Loi Wei Jang, Yap Mei Ying</p> <p>Game proposal Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hullbound : Wei Jang's concept</li> <li>- There is Nothing in This Cave Worth Dying For (TINAG) (Lee Kong's concept)</li> </ul> <p>Set up FYP discord server for communication &amp; log purposes.</p> | <p><b>Supervisor Signature:</b></p>  <p>Ts. DRLANG KOK YEW<br/>           Deputy Dean<br/>           Student Development &amp; Industrial Training<br/>           Faculty of Creative Industries<br/>           Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman</p> |              |   |      |   |      |  |              |  |      |                     |
| <p>Progress (please circle the feedback)</p> <table> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor</td> <td></td> <td>Satisfactory</td> <td></td> <td>Good</td> </tr> </table>                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2            | 3 | 4    | 5 | Poor |  | Satisfactory |  | Good | <p><b>Date:</b></p> |
| 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 3            | 4 | 5    |   |      |  |              |  |      |                     |
| Poor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Satisfactory |   | Good |   |      |  |              |  |      |                     |

| WEEK 02                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Game Title designs for Hullbound and TINI TC</li> <li>• Moodboards for Hullbound and TINI TC</li> <li>• Set up Google Drive as hub for art files/assets</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br><br>Ts. DR. ANG KOK YEW<br>Deputy Dean<br>Student Development & Industrial Training<br>Faculty of Creative Industries<br>Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                                                   | <b>Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

| WEEK 03                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine moodboard for Hullbound &amp; TINI TC</li> <li>• Make slides (I help a bit :))</li> <li>• Finalize the moodboards for presentation slides</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br><br>Ts. DR. ANG KOK YEW<br>Deputy Dean<br>Student Development & Industrial Training<br>Faculty of Creative Industries<br>Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                                            | <b>Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



| WEEK 04                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install common unity edition</li> <li>• Join project Github</li> <li>• Learn how to use unity branches (Thank You Yee Hen)</li> <li>• Discuss with group what are the specifics for art (Character, mood, colour, scenes)</li> <li>• Get in line with game narrative &amp; story</li> <li>• Group discussion of gameplay/story/narrative/level design</li> <li>• Decided <del>the</del> research paper topic</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br><br><br>Ts. DRL ANG KOK YEW<br>Deputy Dean<br>Student Development & Industrial Training<br>Faculty of Creative Industries<br>Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| WEEK 05                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study history &amp; tone</li> <li>• Compile reference &amp; resources to help with concept art + final art asset</li> <li>• Depending on the art, may or may not need to adjust game title design (low priority)</li> <li>• Expand on Wei Jay's sketches (solidify details)</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br><br><br>Ts. DRL ANG KOK YEW<br>Deputy Dean<br>Student Development & Industrial Training<br>Faculty of Creative Industries<br>Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| WEEK 06                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TANK INTERIOR CONCEPT SKETCHES               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Gunner POV (Commander)</li> <li>→ Driver</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Placeholder Assets (Tank Interior)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Gunner POV (Commander)</li> <li>→ Driver</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Research T-72 tank components</li> </ul> <p>To-do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tank</li> <li>• Interior components adjustment &amp; detailing</li> <li>• Commander &amp; Gunner concept</li> <li>• M-42 Tank Enemy + First soldier enemy (Cardboard)</li> <li>• Ticks (Cardboard)</li> <li>• U2 concept</li> <li>• Team Logo</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br><br>Ts. DR ANG KOK YEW<br>Deputy Dean<br>Student Development & Industrial Training<br>Faculty of Creative Industries<br>Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| WEEK 07                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redrew tank interior (with updated placeholders)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To fit game lore</li> <li>• To extend player view</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Story key characters concept sketches               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voron</li> <li>• Alexei</li> </ul> </li> <li>• I now know too much about soviet tanks' design &amp; machine compartments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My research binder thickens</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br><br>Ts. DR ANG KOK YEW<br>Deputy Dean<br>Student Development & Industrial Training<br>Faculty of Creative Industries<br>Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## 8.2 FYP2 Logbook

| Project Paper Consultation Logbook |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Project Title                      | Hullbound         |
| Student Name                       | Yap Mei Ying      |
| Student ID                         | 2204775           |
| Year/Semester                      | Year 3 Semester 2 |
| Supervisor                         | Ts Dr Ang Kok Yew |

| WEEK 01                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Key Art (banner)<br>Website set-up                                                            | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good | <b>Date:</b><br>3 Feb 2026                                                                                           |

| WEEK 02                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Tank Interior colour tests<br>Main Menu                                                | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good | <b>Date:</b><br>10 Feb 2026                                                                                         |

| WEEK 03                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Interior art progress<br>- Scope (Normal)                                              | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good | <b>Date:</b><br>17 Feb 2026                                                                                           |

| WEEK 04                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Interior art progress<br>- Scope (NV)<br>- Comms Device                                | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good | <b>Date:</b><br>24 Feb 2026                                                                                         |

| WEEK 05                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Interior art progress<br>- Ammo Carousel<br>- Gun Breech                               | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good | <b>Date:</b><br>3 Mar 2026                                                                                            |

| WEEK 06                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Interior art progress<br>- Commander Compartment<br>- Redraw Gun Breech                | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good | <b>Date:</b><br>10 Mar 2026                                                                                         |

| WEEK 07                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Art asset<br>- Setup Game Core Filter<br>- Lock Game Colour Palette                    | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good | <b>Date:</b><br>17 Mar 2026                                                                                           |

| WEEK 08                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>Interior Art Progress:<br>- Gunner POV Greyscale<br>- Modified Interior Navigation to Driver Chute to Comms Device | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                             | <b>Date:</b><br>24 Mar 2026                                                                                         |

| WEEK 09                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b><br>- Font for dialogue<br>- Dialogue UI Block-out<br>- Voron Character Asset<br>- Adjusted Commander Compartment so that Voron's Eyes are Visible | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| Progress (please circle the feedback)<br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                         | <b>Date:</b><br>31 Mar 2026                                                                                           |

| WEEK 10                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting for Tank Power System</li> <li>- Driver Chute WIP</li> <li>- Colour-Coded Interior Elements for Better Player Navigation</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                     | <b>Date:</b><br>7 Apr 2026                                                                                          |

| WEEK 11                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Driver Chute Environment Done</li> <li>- Alexei (Driver) Character Asset</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br> |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                             | <b>Date:</b><br>14 Apr 2026                                                                                           |



| WEEK 12                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Main Menu Asset Finalization</li> <li>- Autoloader Assets Replacement</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br> |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                          | <b>Date:</b><br>21 Apr 2026                                                                                             |

| WEEK 13                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alexei Ending Animation (2)</li> <li>- Voron Ending Animation (1)</li> <li>- Designed and Ordered Keychains</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br> |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                | <b>Date:</b><br>28 Apr 2026                                                                                               |

| WEEK 14                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Comments:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation Slides</li> <li>- Concept Board</li> <li>- Game Poster</li> <li>- Flyer/Brochure Order</li> <li>- Stickers Order</li> <li>- Ordered Spaghetti Code: Hullbound Tags</li> </ul> | <b>Supervisor Signature:</b><br><br> |
| <b>Progress (please circle the feedback)</b><br>1      2      3      4      5<br>Poor      Satisfactory      Good                                                                                                                                    | <b>Date:</b><br>5 May 2026                                                                                              |

## 8.3 Final Project Title Form

### Final Project Title Form

Project Type:

- ☒ ~~Product Based Project~~
- ☐ Research Based Project

| Student ID   | Student Name | Email & Contact no                         |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Lai Wei Jay  | 2305701      | jaylai@lutar.my<br>016-986 3986            |
| Lee Kang     | 2204332      | foustringedguitar@lutar.my<br>010-365 0220 |
| Then Yee Hen | 2205069      | alistair@lutar.my<br>018-281 6733          |
| Yap Mei Ying | 2204775      | zasper@lutar.my<br>018-383 0883            |

Supervisor: Ts Dr Ang Kok Yew

Project Title: Hullbound

#### 8.4 Permission Sheet

### **FACULTY OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

### **UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN**

Date: 22 May 2026

### **PERMISSION SHEET**

It is hereby certified that Yap Mei Ying (ID No: 2204775) has completed this final year project and thesis entitled “Study on The Employment of Fine Art Traditions in Video Games” under the supervision of Ts Dr Ang Kok Yew (Supervisor) from the Department of Game Studies, Faculty of Creative and Industries.

I hereby give permission to the University to upload a softcopy of my final year project and thesis in pdf format into UTAR Institutional Repository, which may be made accessible to UTAR community and public.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yap Mei Ying', with a stylized, cursive script.

(Yap Mei Ying)

## 8.5 Turnitin Report



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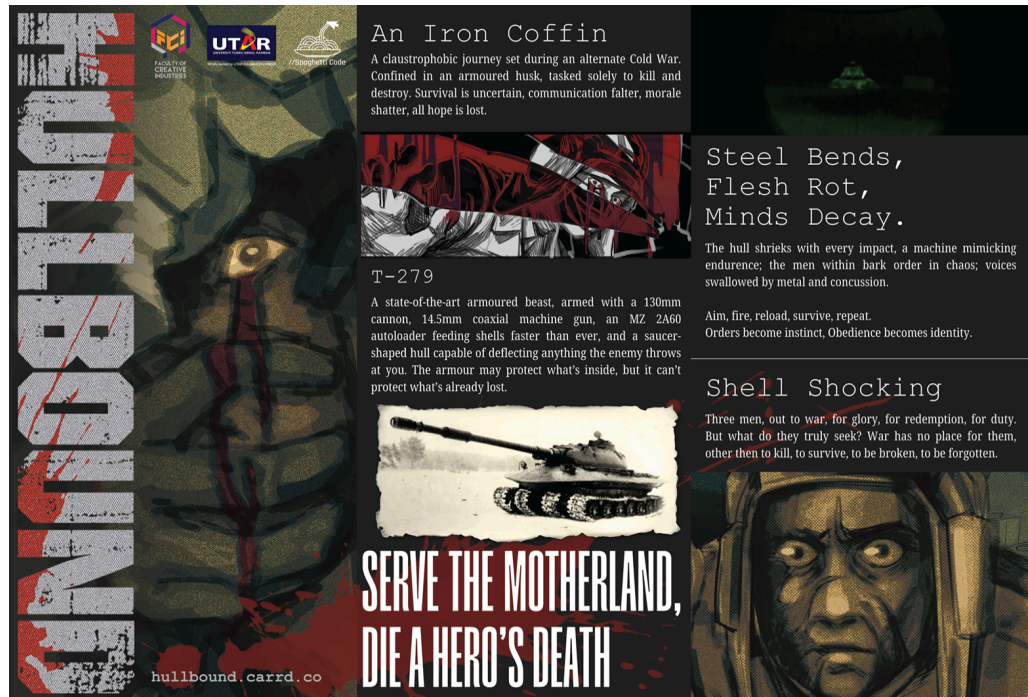
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## 8.6 Game Concept Board



## 8.7 Game Key Art

